The MASTER of WARLOCK

GEORGE · CARY · EGGLESTON

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THE MASTER OF WARLOCK

"In the firelight"

See page 271

THE MASTER OF WARLOCK

A VIRGINIA WAR STORY

By
GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON
AUTHOR OF
"DOROTHY SOUTH,"
"A CAROLINA CAVALIER,"
ETC.

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TO "DOROTHY SOUTH," THE DEAR LITTLE WOMAN WHO HAS BEEN WIFE TO ME FOR THIRTY-FOUR YEARS, WHO HAS UNCONSCIOUSLY INSPIRED ALL MY WORK, AND WHOSE PERSONALITY, IN ITS SEVERAL PHASES, IT HAS BEEN MY LOVING ENDEAVOUR TO PORTRAY IN ALL THE STORIES I HAVE WRITTEN, I DEDICATE THIS BOOK WITH REVERENCE AND SOUL-FELT THANKS.

GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON.

Culross, October 18, 1902.

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The Master of Warlock

I

A break in the bridge

THE road was a winding, twisting track as it threaded its way through a stretch of old field pines. The land was nearly level at that point, and quite unobstructed, so that there was not the slightest reason that ordinary intelligence could discover for the roadway's devious wanderings. It might just as well have run straight through the pine lands.

But in Virginia people were never in a hurry. They had all of leisure that well-settled and perfectly self-satisfied ways of life could bring to a people whose chief concern it was to live uprightly and happily in that state of existence into which it had pleased God to call them. What difference could it make to a people so minded, whether the

journey to the Court-house — the centre and seat of county activities of all kinds — were a mile or two longer or shorter by reason of meaningless curves in the road, or by reason of a lack of them? Why should they bother to straighten out road windings that had the authority of long use for their being? And why should the well-fed negro drivers of family carriages shake themselves out of their customary and comfortable naps in order to drive more directly across the pine land, when the horses, if left to themselves, would placidly follow the traditional track?

The crookedness of the road was a fact, and Virginians of that time always accepted and respected facts to which they had been long accustomed. For that sufficient reason Baillie Pegram, the young master of Warlock, was not thinking of the road at all, but accepting it as he did the greenery of the trees and the bursting of the buds, as he jogged along at a dog-trot on that fine April morning in the year of our Lord 1861.

He was well mounted upon a mettlesome sorrel mare, — a mare with pronounced ideas of her own. The young man had taught her to bend these somewhat to his will, but her individuality

was not yet so far subdued or suppressed as to lose itself in that of her master. So she suddenly halted and vigorously snorted as she came within sight of the little bridge over Dogwood Branch, where a horse and a young gentlewoman were obviously in trouble.

I name the horse and the girl in that ungallant reverse order, because that was the order in which they revealed themselves to the mare and her master. For the girl was on the farther side of the horse, and stooping, so that she could not be seen at a first glance. As she heard approaching hoof-beats she straightened herself into that dignity of demeanour which every young Virginia gentlewoman felt it to be her supreme duty in life to maintain under any and all circumstances.

She was gowned in the riding-habit of that time, with glove-fitting body and a skirt so long that, even when its wearer sat upon a high horse, it extended to within eighteen inches of the ground. When Baillie Pegram reached the little bridge and hastily dismounted, she was standing as erect as a young hickory-tree, making the most of her five feet four of height, and holding the

skirt up sufficiently to free her feet. She wore a look half of welcome, half of defiance on her face. The defiance was prompted by a high-bred maidenly sense of propriety and by something else. The welcome was due to an instinctive rejoicing in the coming of masculine help. For the girl was indeed in sore need of assistance. Her horse had slipped his foot through a break in the bridge flooring, and after a painful struggle, had given up the attempt to extricate it. He was panting with pain, and his young mistress was sympathetically sharing every pain that he suffered.

Baillie Pegram gave the girl a rather formal greeting as he dismounted. Stooping he examined the imprisoned leg of the animal. Then seizing a stone from the margin of the stream, he quickly beat the planking loose from its fastenings, releasing the poor brute from its pillory. But the freed foot did not plant itself upon the ground again. The horse held it up, limp and dangling. Seeing what had happened, the young man promptly ungirthed the saddles, and transferred that of the young woman to the back of his own animal.

"You must take my mare, Miss Ronald," he

said. "Your horse is in no condition to carry you, and, poor fellow, he never will be again."

"Just what has happened, Mr. Pegram?" the girl asked, with a good deal of hauteur in her tone.

"Your horse's leg is broken beyond all possibility of repair," he answered. "I will take care of him for you, and you must ride my mare. She is a trifle unruly at times, and not very bridle-wise, so that she is scarcely fit for a lady's use. But I take it you know how to ride."

The girl did not answer at once. After a space she said:

"You forget that I am Agatha Ronald."

"No, I do not forget," he answered. "I remember that fact with regret whenever I think of you. However, under the circumstances, you must so far overcome your prejudice as to accept the use of my mare."

There was a mingling of hauteur and amusement in the girl's voice and countenance as she answered:

"Permit me, Mr. Pegram, to thank you for your courteous proffer of help, *and to decline it.*"

"I need no thanks," he said, "for a trifling

courtesy which is so obviously imperative. As for declining it, why of course you cannot do that."

"Why not?" she asked, resentfully. "Am I not my own mistress? Surely you would not take advantage of my mishap to force unwelcome attentions upon me?"

The utterance was an affront, and Baillie Pegram saw clearly that it was intended to be such. He bit his lip, but controlled himself.

"I will not think," he answered, "that you quite meant to say that. You are too just to do even me a wrong, and surely I have not deserved such an affront at your hands. Nor can the circumstances that prompt you to decline any unnecessary courtesy at my hands justify you in —well, in saying what you have just said. I have not sought to force attentions upon you, and you know it. I have only asked you to let me behave like a gentleman under circumstances which are not of my making or my seeking. Your horse is hopelessly lamed — so hopelessly that as soon as you are gone, I am going to kill him by the roadside as an act of ordinary humanity. You are fully five miles from The Oaks, where you

are staying with your aunts. Except in this bit of pine barren, the roads are exceedingly muddy. You are habited for riding, and you could not walk far in that costume, even upon the best of roads. You simply must make use of my mare. I cannot permit you to refuse. If I did so, I should incur the lasting and just disapproval of your aunts, The Oaks ladies. You certainly do not wish me to do that. I have placed your saddle upon my mare, and I am waiting to help you mount."

The girl hesitated, bewildered, unwilling, and distinctly in that feminine state of mind which women call "vexed." At last she asked:

"What will you do if I refuse?"

"O, in that case I shall turn the mare loose, and walk at a respectful distance behind you as you trudge over the miry road, until you become hopelessly involved in the red clay at Vinegar Post. Then I shall rush to your rescue like a gallant knight, and carry you pick-a-back all the way to The Oaks. It will be a singularly undignified approach to a mansion in which the proprieties of life are sternly insisted upon. Don't

you think you'd better take the mare, Miss Ronald?"

The girl stood silent for nearly a minute in a half-angry mood of resistance, which was in battle with the laughing demon that just now possessed her. She did not want to laugh. She was determined not to laugh. Therefore she laughed uncontrollably, as one is apt to do when something ludicrous occurs at a funeral. Presently she said:

"I wonder what it was all about anyhow — the quarrel, I mean, between your grandfather and my poor father?"

There was a touch of melancholy in her tone as she spoke of her "poor father" — for that phrase, in Virginian usage, always meant that the dear one mentioned was dead. "I wonder what it was that makes it so imperative for me to be formally courteous beyond the common to you, and at the same time highly improper for me to accept such ordinary courtesies at your hands as I freely accept from others, thinking nothing about the matter."

"Would you really like to know?" the young man asked.

"Yes — no. I'm not quite certain. Sometimes I want to know — just now, for example — so that I may know just what my duty is. But at other times I think it should be enough for me, as a well-ordered young person, to know that I must be loyal to my poor father's memory, and never forgive a Pegram while I live. My good aunts have taught me that much, but they have never told me anything about the origin of the feud. All I know is that, in order to be true to the memory of my poor father, who died before I was born, I must always remember that the Ronalds and the Pegrams are hereditary enemies. That is why I refuse to use the mare which you have so courteously offered me, Mr. Pegram."

"Still," answered the young man, as if arguing the matter out with himself, "it might not compromise your dignity so much to ride a mare that belongs to me, as to let me 'tote' you home — for that is precisely what I must do if you persist in your refusal."

The girl again laughed, merrily this time, but still she hesitated:

"Listen!" said Baillie; "that's my boy Sam

coming. It would be unseemly for us to continue our quarrel in the presence of a servant."

As he spoke the voice of Sam rose from beyond the pines, in a ditty which he was singing with all the power of a robust set of vocal organs:

"My own Eliza gal — she's de colour ob de night,
When de moon it doesn't shine a little bit;
But her teeth shows white in de shaddah ob de night,
And her eyes is like a lantern when it's lit.

"Oh, Eliza!
How I prize yeh!
You'se de nicest gal dere is;
It's fer you dat I'se a-pinin',
For you're like a star dat's shinin'
When de moon it's done forgitten how to riz."

With that Sam came beaming upon the scene. His round, black, shining visage, and eyes that glittered with a humour which might have won an anchorite to merriment, resembled nothing so much as the sun at its rising, if one may think of the sun as black and glistening from a diligent rubbing with a bacon rind, which was Sam's favourite cosmetic, as it is of all the very black negroes.

Sam was sitting sidewise upon a saddleless mule, but when he saw the situation he quickly

slipped to the ground, pulled his woolly forelock in lieu of doffing the hat which he had not, and asked:

"What's de mattah, Mas' Baillie?"

The girl saw the impropriety of continuing the discussion — it had ceased to be a quarrel now — in Sam's presence. So she held out her hand, and said:

"Thank you very much, Mr. Pegram. I will ride your beautiful mare, and to-morrow, if you are so minded, you may call at The Oaks to inquire how the animal has behaved toward me. Good morning, sir!"

She sprang into the saddle without waiting for young Pegram to assist her, for she was even yet determined to accept no more of attention at his hands than she must. He, in his turn, was too greatly relieved by this ending of the embarrassing scene to care for the implied snub to his gallantry. As soon as the girl rode away, which she did without pausing for a moment, Baillie Pegram turned to Sam, and without inquiring upon what errand that worthy had been going, gave the order:

"Mount your mule and ride at a respectful

distance behind Miss Agatha Ronald. She may have trouble with that half-broken mare of mine. And mind you, boy, don't entertain the young lady with any of your songs as you go. When you get back to Warlock, bring me a horse to the Court-house, do you hear?"

Then leading the wounded animal upon three legs into the woods near by, Pegram fired a charge of shot from the fowling-piece which he carried, into its brain, killing the poor beast instantly and painlessly.

Having discharged this duty of mercy, the young man, with high boots drawn over his trousers' legs, set out with a brisk stride for the county-seat village, known only as "the Court-house." Entering the clerk's office, he said to the county clerk:

"As a magistrate of this county I direct you to enter a fine of five dollars against Baillie Pegram, Esq., supervisor of the Vinegar Post road, for his neglect to keep the bridge over Dogwood Branch in repair. Here's the money. Give me a receipt, please, and make the proper entries upon the court records."

"Pardon me, Mr. Pegram," answered the

clerk, "but you remember that at the last term of the county court, with a full bench of magistrates sitting, it was decided to adjourn the court indefinitely in view of the disturbed condition of the time?"

"I remember that," answered the young man, "but that action was taken only upon the ground that under present circumstances it would work hardship to many for the courts to meet for the enforcement of debts. This is a very different case. As road supervisor I am charged with a public duty which I have neglected. As a magistrate it is my duty to fine every road supervisor who is derelict. No session of the court is necessary for that. I shall certainly not tolerate such neglect of duty on the part of any county officer, particularly when I happen to be myself the derelict official. So enter the fine and give me a receipt for the money."

Does all this impress the reader as quixotic? Was it a foolish sentimentalism that prompted these men to serve their neighbours and the public without pay, and, upon occasion, to hold themselves rigidly responsible to a high standard of duty? Was it quixotism which prompted

George Washington to serve his country without one dollar of pay, through seven years of war, as the general of its armies, and through nearly twice that time as President, first of the Constitutional Convention, and afterwards, for eight years, as President of the nation? Was it an absurd sentimentalism that prompted him, after he had declined pay, to decline also the gifts voluntarily and urgently pressed upon him by his own and other States, and by the nation? The humourists ridicule all such sentiment. But the humourists are not a court of final appeal. At any rate, this sentimentality had its good side.

But at this time of extreme excitement, there were, no doubt, ludicrous exaggerations of sentiment and conduct now and then, and on this sixteenth day of April, 1861, the master of Warlock encountered some things that greatly amused him. Having finished his business in the clerk's office, he found himself in the midst of excited throngs. Startling news had come from Richmond that morning. In view of the bombardment of Fort Sumter, President Lincoln had called for seventy-five thousand men as an army with which to reduce the seceding States to subjection.

Virginia was not one of the seceding States. Up to that time, she had utterly repudiated the thought that secession was justified by Mr. Lincoln's election, or by any threat to the South which his accession to office implied.

The statesmen of Virginia had busied themselves for months with efforts to find a way out of the difficulties that beset the country. They were intent upon saving that Union which had been born of Virginia's suggestion, if such saving could be accomplished by any means that did not involve dishonour. The people of Virginia, when called upon to decide the question of their own course in such a crisis by the election of a constitutional convention, had overwhelmingly decided it against secession, and in favour of adherence to the Union. Under Virginia's influence, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Arkansas, and Missouri had refused to secede.

But while the Virginians were thus opposed to secession, and while they were fully convinced that secession was neither necessary nor advisable under the circumstances then existing, they were of one mind in believing that the constitutional right

of any State to withdraw from the Union at will was absolute and indefeasible. So when Mr. Lincoln called upon Virginia for her quota of troops with which to coerce back into the Union those States which had exercised what the Virginians held to be their rightful privilege of withdrawal, it seemed to the Virginians that there was forced upon them a choice between secession and unspeakable dishonour. They wanted to remain in the Union, of which their State had been from the beginning so influential a part. They were intensely loyal to the history and traditions of that Union over which their Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and Tyler had presided, and at the head of whose supreme court their John Marshall had so wisely interpreted the constitution. But when Mr. Lincoln notified them that they must furnish their quota of troops with which to make war upon sister States for exercising a right which the Virginians deemed unquestionable, they felt that they had no choice but to join the seceding States and take the consequences.

What a pity it seems, as we look back upon that crisis of forty odd years ago, that Mr. Lincoln could not have found some other way out

of his difficulties! What a pity that he could not have seen his way clear to omit Virginia and the other border States from his call for troops, with which to make war upon secession! Doubtless it was impracticable for him to make such a distinction. But the pity of it is none the less on that account. For if this might have been done, there would have been no civil war worthy the attention of the historian or the novelist. In that case the battles of Bull Run, the Seven Days, Fredericksburg, Antietam, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, Cold Harbour, and the rest of the bloody encounters would never have been fought. In that case the country would not have exhausted itself with four years of strenuous war, enlisting 2,700,000 men on one side, and 600,000 on the other. In that case many thousands of brave young lives would have been spared, and the desolation of homes by tens of thousands would not have come upon the land.

It is idle, however, to speculate in "if's," even when their significance is so sadly obvious as it is in this case. Facts are facts, and the all-dominating fact on that 16th of April, 1861, was that President Lincoln had called upon Vir-

ginia for her quota of troops with which to make war upon the seceding States, and that Virginia had no mind to respond to the call.

It was certain now, that Virginia — however reluctantly and however firmly convinced she might be that secession was uncalled for on the part of the Southern States, would adopt an ordinance of secession, and thus make inevitable the coming of the greatest war in all history, where otherwise no war at all, or at most an insignificant one, would have occurred.

There was no question in the minds of any body at the Court-house on this sixteenth day of April, 1861, that Virginia would secede as soon as a vote could be taken in the convention.

The county was a small one, insignificant in the number of its white inhabitants, — there being six negroes to one white in its population, — but it was firmly convinced that upon its attitude depended the fate of Virginia, and perhaps of the nation. This conviction was strong, at any rate, in the minds of the three local orators who had ordered a muster for this day in order that they might have an audience to harangue. These were Colonel Gregor, of the militia and the bar,

Lieutenant-Colonel Simpson, also of the bar and the militia, and Captain Sam Guthrie, who commanded a troop of uniformed horsemen, long ago organised for purposes of periodical picnicking. This troop afterward rendered conspicuously good service in Stuart's First Regiment of Virginia cavalry, but not under Captain Guthrie's command. That officer, early in the campaign, developed a severe case of nervous prostration, and retired. The militiamen also volunteered, and rendered their full four years of service. But Lieutenant-Colonel Simpson retired during his first and only skirmish, while Colonel Gregor discovered in himself a divine call to the ministry of the gospel, and stayed at home to answer it. But all this came later. In April, 1861, these three were the eager advocates of war, instant and terrible. Under inspiration of the news from Richmond, they spouted like geysers throughout that day. They could not have been more impassioned in their pleas if theirs had been a reluctant community, in danger of disgracing itself by refusing to furnish its fair share of volunteers for Virginia's defence, though in fact every able-bodied

man in the county had already signified his intention of volunteering at the first opportunity.

But the orators were not minded to miss so good an opportunity to display their eloquence, and impress themselves upon the community. Colonel Gregor, in a fine burst of eloquence, warned his fellow citizens, whom he always addressed as "me countrymen," to examine themselves carefully touching their personal courage, "for," he thundered, "where Gregor leads, brave men must follow."

Later in the day, Lieutenant-Colonel Simpson hit upon the happy idea, which his superior officer at once adopted, of ordering the entire militia of the county into camp at the Court-house, where the three men eloquent might harangue them at will between drills. The two field-officers told the men that they must now regard themselves as minute men, and hold themselves in readiness to respond at a moment's notice to the country's call, for the repelling of invasion, whensoever it might come.

All this impressed Baillie Pegram as ridiculous. That young gentleman had a saving sense of humour, but he was content to smile at a foolish-

ness in which he had no mind to join. The young men of the county responded enthusiastically to the encampment call. It meant for them some days of delightful picnicking, with dancing in the evening.

Baillie Pegram, having business to transact in Richmond, absented himself from a frolic not to his taste, and took the noonday train for the State capital.

II

The bringing up of Agatha

AGATHA ROLAND was a particularly well ordered young gentlewoman, at least during her long, half-yearly visits to her aunts at The Oaks. At home with her maternal grandfather, Colonel Archer, she was neither well nor ill ordered — she was not ordered at all. She gave orders instead, in a gentle way; and her word was law, by virtue of her grandfather's insistence that it should be so regarded, and still more by reason of something in herself that gently gave authority to her will.

Agatha had been born at The Oaks, and that plantation was to be her property at the death of her two elderly maiden aunts, her dead father's sisters. But she had been taken as a little child to the distant home of her grandfather, Colonel Archer, and after her mother's death she had

lived there alone with that sturdy old Virginia gentleman.

She was less than seven years old when he installed her behind the tea-tray in her dead mother's stead, and made her absolute mistress of the mansion, issuing the order that " whatever Miss Agatha wants done must be done, or I will find out why." Her good aunts sought to interfere at first, but they soon learned better. They wanted the girl to come to them at The Oaks " for her bringing up," they said. Upon that plan Colonel Archer instantly put a veto that was not the less peremptory for the reason that he could not " put his foot down " just then, because of an attack of the gout. Then the good ladies urged him to take " some gentlewoman of mature years and high character " into his house, " to look after the child's bringing up, so that her manners may be such as befit a person of her lineage."

To this appeal the old gentleman replied:

" I'll look after all that myself. I don't want the child taught a lot of nonsense, and I won't have her placed under anybody's authority. She doesn't need control, any more than the birds do;

she shall grow up here at Willoughby in perfect freedom and naturalness. I'll be responsible for the result. She shall wear bonnets whenever she wants to, and go without them whenever that pleases her best; when she wants to go barefoot and wade in the branches, as all healthy children like to do, she shall not be told that her conduct is 'highly improper,' and all that nonsense. O, I know," he said, in anticipation of a protest that he saw coming, "I know she'll get 'dreadfully tanned,' and become a tomboy — and all the rest of it. But I'll answer for it that when she grows up her perfectly healthy skin will bear comparison with the complexion of the worst house-burnt young woman in all the land, and as for her figure, nature will take care of that under the life of liberty that she's going to live, in the air and sunshine."

"But you'll surely send her to school?"

"Not if I retain my senses. I remember my humanities well enough to teach her all the Latin, Greek, and mathematics she needs. We'll read history and literature together, and as for French, I speak that language a good deal better than most of the dapper little dancing-masters

do who keep 'young ladies' seminaries.' We'll ride horseback together every day, and I'll teach her French while I'm teaching her how to take an eight-rail fence at a gallop."

The remonstrances were continued for a time, until one day the old gentleman made an end of them by saying:

"I have heard all I want to hear on that subject. It is not to be mentioned to me again."

Everybody who knew Colonel Archer knew that when he spoke in that tone of mingled determination and self-restraint, it was a dictate of prudence to respect his wish. So after that Agatha and he lived alone at Willoughby, a plantation in Northern Virginia three or four days distant by carriage from The Oaks.

Morning, noon, and night, these two were inseparable companions. "Chummie" was the pet name she gave him in her childish days, and he would never permit her to address him by any other as she grew up.

Old soldier that he was, — for he had commanded a company under Jackson at New Orleans, and had been a colonel during the war with Mexico, — it was his habit to exact im-

plicit obedience within his own domain. He was the kindliest of masters, but his will was law on the plantation, and as everybody there recognised the fact, he never had occasion to give an order twice, or to mete out censure for disobedience. But for Agatha there was no law. Colonel Archer would permit none, while she in her turn made it her one study in life to be and do whatever her "Chummie" liked best.

Colonel Archer had a couple of gardeners, of course, but their work was mainly to do the rougher things of horticulture. He and Agatha liked to do the rest for themselves. They prepared the garden-beds, seeded them, and carefully nursed their growths into fruitage, he teaching her, as they did so, that love of all growing things which is botany's best lesson.

"And the plants love us back again, Chummie," she one day said to him, while she was still a little child. "They smile when we go near them, and sometimes the pansies whisper to me. I'm sure of that."

She was at that time a slender child, with big, velvety brown eyes and a tangled mass of brown hair which her maid Martha struggled in

vain to reduce to subjection. She usually put on a sunbonnet when she went to the garden in the early morning; but when it obstructed her vision, or otherwise annoyed her, she would push it off, letting it fall to her back and hang by its strings about her neck. Even then it usually became an annoyance, particularly when she wanted to climb a fruit-tree, and Martha would find it later, resting upon a cluster of rose-bushes, or hung upon a fence-paling.

The pair of chums — the sturdy old gentleman and the little girl — had no regular hours for any of their employments, but at some hour of every day, they got out their books and read or studied together.

They were much on horseback, too, and when autumn came they would tramp together through stubble fields and broom-straw growths, shooting quails on the wing — partridges, they correctly called them, as it is the habit of everybody in Virginia to do, for the reason that the bird which the New York marketman calls "quail," is properly named "Partridge Virginiensis," while the bird that the marketman sells as a partridge is not a partridge at all, but a grouse. The girl became a

good shot during her first season, and a year later she challenged her grandfather to a match, to see who could bag the greater number of birds. At the end of the morning's sport, her bag outnumbered her companion's by two birds; but when the count was made, she looked with solemn eyes into her grandfather's face and, shaking her head in displeasure, said:

"Chummie, you've been cheating! I don't like to think it of you, but it's true. You've missed several birds on purpose to let me get ahead of you. I'll never count birds with you again."

The old gentleman tried to laugh the matter off, but the girl would not consent to that. After awhile she said: "I'll forgive you this time, Chummie; but I'll never count birds with you again."

"But why not, Ladybird?"

"Why, because you don't like to beat me, and I don't like to beat you. So if we go on counting birds and each trying to lose the match, we'll get to be very bad shots. Besides that, Chummie, cheating will impair your character."

But the girl was not left without the companionship of girls of her own age. Colonel Archer

was too wise a student of human nature for that. So from the beginning he planned to give her the companionship she needed.

"You are the mistress of Willoughby, you know, Agatha," he said to her one day, "and you must keep up the reputation of the place for hospitality. You must have your dining-days like the rest, and invite your friends."

And she did so. She would send out her little notes, written in a hand that closely resembled that of her grandfather, begging half a dozen girls, daughters of the planters round about, to dine with her, and they would come in their carriages, attended by their negro maids. It was Colonel Archer's delight to watch Agatha on these occasions, and observe the very serious way in which she sought to discharge her duties as a hospitable hostess in becoming fashion.

A little later he encouraged her to invite two or three of her young friends, now and then, to stay for a few days or a week with her, after the Virginian custom. But not until she was twelve years old did he consent to spare her for longer than a single night. Then he agreed with The Oaks ladies that she should spend a few weeks

in the spring and a few in the late summer or autumn of every year with them. They welcomed the arrangement as one which would at least give them an opportunity to "form the girl." During her semi-annual visits to The Oaks they very diligently set themselves to work drilling her in the matter of respect for the formalities of life.

The process rather interested Agatha, and sometimes it even amused her. She was solemnly enjoined not to do things that she had never thought of doing, and as earnestly instructed to do things which she had never in her life neglected to do.

At first she was too young to formulate the causes of her interest and amusement in this process. But her mind matured rapidly in association with her grandfather, and she began at last to analyse the matter.

"When I go to The Oaks," she wrote to her "Chummie" one day, "I feel like a sinner going to do penance; but the penance is rather amusing than annoying. I am made to feel how shockingly improper I have been at Willoughby with you, Chummie, during the preceding six months, and

how necessary it is for me to submit myself for a season to a control that shall undo the effects of the liberty in which I live at Willoughby. I am made to understand that liberty is the very worst thing a girl or a woman can indulge herself in. Am I very bad, Chummie?"

For answer the old gentleman laughed aloud. Then he wrote:

"You see how shrewdly I have managed this thing, Ladybird. I wouldn't let you go to The Oaks till you had become too fully confirmed in your habit of being free, ever to be reformed."

Later, and more seriously, he said to the girl:

"Every human being is the better for being free — women as well as men. Liberty to a human being is like sunshine and fresh air. Restraint is like medicine — excellent for those who are ill, but very bad indeed for healthy people. Did it ever occur to you, Agatha, that you never took a pill or a powder in your life? You haven't needed medicine because you've had air and sunshine; no more do you need restraint, and for the same reason. You are perfectly healthy in your mind as well as in your body."

"But, Chummie, you don't know how very ill

regulated I am. Aunt Sarah and Aunt Jane disapprove very seriously of many things that I do."

"What things?"

"Well, they say, for example, that it is very unladylike for me to call you 'Chummie,' — that it indicates a want of that respect for age and superiority which every young person — you know I am only a 'young person' to them — should scrupulously cultivate."

"Well, now, let me give you warning, Miss Agatha Ronald; if you ever call me anything but 'Chummie,' I'll alter my will, and leave this plantation to the Abolitionist Society as an experiment station."

Nevertheless, Agatha Ronald was, as has been said at the beginning of this chapter, a particularly well ordered young gentlewoman so long as she remained as a guest with her aunts at The Oaks. She loved the gentle old ladies dearly, and strove with all her might, while with them, to comport herself in accordance with their standards of conduct on the part of a young gentlewoman.

Sometimes, however, her innocence misled

her, as it had done on that morning when Baillie Pegram had met her at the bridge over Dogwood Branch. The spirit of the morning had taken possession of her on that occasion, and she had so far reverted from her condition of dame-nurtured grace into her habitual state of nature as to mount her horse and ride away without the escort even of a negro groom. It was not at all unusual at that time for young gentlewomen in Virginia to ride thus alone, but The Oaks ladies strongly disapproved the custom, as they disapproved all other customs that had come into being since their own youth had passed away, especially all customs that in any way tended to enlarge the innocent liberty of young women. On this point the good ladies were as rigidly insistent as if they had been the ladies superior of a convent of young nuns. They could not have held liberty for young gentlewomen in greater dread and detestation, had they believed, as they certainly did not, in the total depravity of womankind.

"It is not that we fear you would do anything wrong, dear," they would gently explain. "It is only that — well, you see a young gentlewoman cannot be too careful."

Agatha did not see, but she yielded to the prejudices of her aunts with a loyalty all the more creditable to her for the reason that she did not and could not share their views. On this occasion she had not thought of offending. It had not occurred to her that there could be the slightest impropriety in her desire to greet the morning on horseback, and certainly it had not entered her mind that she might meet Baillie Pegram and be compelled to accept a courtesy at his hands. She knew, as she rode silently homeward after that meeting at the bridge, that in this respect she had sinned beyond overlooking.

For Agatha Ronald knew that she must be on none but the most distant and formal terms with the master of Warlock. She had learned that lesson at Christmas-time, three months before. She had spent the Christmas season in Richmond, with some friends. There Baillie Pegram had met her for the first time since she had attained her womanhood — for he had been away at college, at law school, or on his travels at the time of all her more recent sojourns at The Oaks. He had known her very slightly as a shy and wild little girl, but the

Agatha Ronald

woman Agatha was a revelation to him, and her beauty not less than her charm of manner and her unusual intelligence, had fascinated him. He frequented the house of her Richmond friends, and had opportunities to learn more every day of herself. He did not pause to analyse his feeling for her; he only knew that it was quite different from any that he had ever experienced before. And Agatha, in her turn and in her candor, had admitted to herself that she "liked" young Pegram better than any other young man she had ever met.

No word of love had passed between these two, and both were unconscious of their state of mind, when their intercourse was suddenly interrupted. A note came to Baillie one day from Agatha, in which the frank and fearlessly honest young woman wrote:

"I am not to see you any more, Mr. Pegram. I am informed by my relatives that there are circumstances for which neither of us is responsible, which render it quite improper that you and I should be friends. I am very sorry, but I think it my duty to tell you this myself. I thank you for

all your kindnesses to me before we knew about this thing."

That was absolutely all there was of the note, but it was quite enough. It had set Baillie to inquiring concerning a feud of which he vaguely knew the existence, but to which he had never before given the least attention.

That is how it came about that Agatha rode sadly homeward after the meeting at the bridge, wondering how she could have done otherwise than accept the use of Baillie Pegram's mare, and wondering still more what her aunts would say to her concerning the matter.

"Anyhow," she thought at last, "I've done no intentional wrong. Chummie would not blame me if he were here, and I am not sure that I shall accept much blame at anybody's else hands. I'll be good and submissive if I can, but — well, I don't know. Maybe I'll hurry back home to Chummie."

III

Jessamine and honeysuckle

IT was a peculiarity of inherited quarrels between old Virginia families that they must never be recognised outwardly by any act of discourtesy, and still less by any neglect of formal attention where courtesy was called for. Such quarrels were never mentioned between the families that were involved in them, and equally they were never forgotten. Each member of either family owed it to himself to treat all members of the other family with the utmost deference, while never for a moment permitting that deference to lapse into anything that could be construed to mean forgiveness or forgetfulness.

Agatha, as we have seen, had twice violated the code under which such affairs were conducted; once in the note she had sent to Baillie Pegram in Richmond, and for the second time in giving him permission to call at The Oaks to inquire

concerning her journey homeward on his mare. But on both occasions she had been out of the presence and admonitory influence of her aunts, and when absent from them, Agatha Ronald was not at all well regulated, as we know. She was given to acting upon her own natural and healthy-minded impulses, and such impulses were apt to be at war with propriety as propriety was understood and insisted upon at The Oaks.

But Baillie Pegram was not minded to make any mistake in a matter of so much delicacy and importance. He had received Agatha's permission to make that formal call of inquiry, which was customary on all such occasions, and she in her heedlessness had probably meant what she said, as it was her habit to do. But Baillie knew very well that her good aunts would neither expect nor wish him to call upon their niece. At the same time he must not leave his omission to do so unexplained. He must send a note of apology, not to Agatha, — as he would have done to any other young woman under like circumstances, — but to her aunts instead. In a note to them he reported his sudden summons to Richmond, adding that as he was uncertain as to the

length of his stay there, he begged the good ladies to accept his absence from home as his sufficient excuse for not calling to inquire concerning the behaviour of his mare during their niece's journey upon that rather uncertain-minded animal's back. This note he gave to Sam for delivery, when Sam brought him the horse he had ordered but no longer wanted.

Baillie Pegram had all the pride of his lineage and his class. He had sought to forget all about Agatha Ronald after her astonishing little note had come to him some months before in Richmond, and until this morning he had believed that he had accomplished that forgetfulness. But now the thought of her haunted him ceaselessly. All the way to Richmond her beauty and her charm, as she had stood there by the roadside, filled his mind with visions that tortured him. He tried with all his might to dismiss the visions and to think of something else. He bought the daily papers and tried to interest himself in their excited utterances, but failed. Red-hot leaders, that were meant to stir all Virginian souls to wrathful resolution, made no impression on his mind. He read them, and knew not what

he had read. He was thinking of the girl by the roadside, and his soul was fascinated with the memory of her looks, her words, her finely modulated voice, her ways, as she had tried to refuse his offer of assistance. Had he been of vain and conceited temper, he might have flattered himself with the thought that her very hauteur in converse with him implied something more and better than indifference on her part toward him. But that thought did not enter his mind. He thought instead:

"What a sublimated idiot I am! That girl is nothing to me — worse than nothing. Circumstances place her wholly outside my acquaintance, except in the most formal fashion. She is a young gentlewoman of my own class — distinctly superior to all the other young gentlewomen of that class whom I have ever met, — and ordinarily it would be the most natural thing in the world for me to pay my addresses to her. But in this case that is completely out of the question. To me at least she is the unattainable. I must school myself to think of her no more, and that ought to be easy enough, as I am not in love with her and am not permitted even to

think of being so. It's simply a craze that has taken possession of me for a time, — the instinct of the huntsman, to whom quarry is desirable in the precise ratio of its elusiveness. There, I've thought the whole thing out to an end, and now I must give my mind to something more important."

Yet even in the midst of the excitement that prevailed in Richmond that day, Baillie Pegram did not quite succeed in driving out of his mind the memory of the little tableau by the bridge, or forgetting how supremely fascinating Agatha Ronald had seemed, as she had haughtily declined his offer of service, and still more as she had reluctantly accepted it, and ridden away after so cleverly evading his offer to help her mount.

It had been his purpose to remain in Richmond for a week or more, but on the third morning he found himself homeward bound, and filled with vain imaginings. Just why he had started homeward before the intended time, it would have puzzled him to say; but several times he caught himself wondering if there would be awaiting him at Warlock an answer to his formal note of apology for not having made a call which nobody

had expected him to make. He perfectly knew that no such answer was to be expected, and especially that if there should be any answer at all, it must be one of formal and repellent courtesy, containing no message from Agatha of the kind that his troubled imagination persisted in conceiving in spite of the scorn with which he rejected the absurd conjecture.

Nevertheless as he neared home he found himself half-expecting to find there an answer to his note, and he found it. It gave him no pleasure in the reading, and in his present state of mind he could not find even a source of amusement in the stilted formality of its rhetoric. It had been written by one of Agatha's aunts, and signed by both of them. Thus it ran:

"The Misses Ronald of The Oaks feel themselves deeply indebted to Mr. Baillie Pegram for his courtesy to their niece and guest, Miss Agatha Ronald, on the occasion of her recent misadventure. They have also to thank Mr. Pegram most sincerely for having taken upon himself the disagreeable duty of giving painless death to the

unfortunate animal that their niece was riding upon that occasion. They have to inform Mr. Pegram that as Miss Agatha Ronald is making her preparations for an almost immediate return to her maternal grandfather's plantation of Willoughby, in Fauquier, and as she will probably begin her journey before Mr. Pegram's return from Richmond, there will scarcely be opportunity for his intended call to inquire concerning her welfare after her homeward ride upon the mare which he so graciously placed at her disposal at a time of sore need. They beg to report that the beautiful animal behaved with the utmost gentleness during the journey.

" The Oaks ladies beg to assure Mr. Pegram of their high esteem, and to express their hope that he will permit none of the events of this troubled time to prevent him from dining with them at The Oaks on the third Friday of each month, as it has been his courteous custom to do in the past. The Misses Ronald remain,

" Most respectfully,

" SARAH RONALD,

" JANE RONALD."

This missive was more than a little bewildering. Its courtesy was extreme. Even in practically telling Baillie Pegram not to call upon their niece, the good ladies had adroitly managed to make their message seem rather one of regret than of prohibition. Certainly there was not a word in the missive at which offence could be taken, and not an expression lacking, the lack of which could imply negligence. The young man read it over several times before he could make out its exact significance, and even then he was not quite sure that he fully understood.

"It reads like a 'joint note' from the Powers to the Grand Turk," he said to the young man — his bosom friend — whom he had found awaiting him at Warlock on his return. This young man, Marshall Pollard, had been Baillie Pegram's intimate at the university, and now that university days were done, it was his habit to come and go at will at Warlock, the plantation of which Baillie was owner and sole white occupant with the exception of a maiden aunt who presided over his household.

The intimacy between these two young men was always a matter of wonder to their friends.

They had few tastes in common, except that both had a passionate love for books. Baillie Pegram was fond of fishing and shooting and riding to hounds. He loved a horse from foretop to fetlock. His friend cared nothing for sport of any kind, and very often he walked over long distances rather than "jolt on horseback," as he explained. He was thoroughly manly, but of dreamy, introspective moods and quiet tastes. But these two agreed in their love of books, and especially of such rare old books as abounded in the Warlock library, the accumulation of generations of cultivated and intellectual men and women. They agreed, too, in their fondness for each other.

Marshall Pollard was never regarded as a guest at Warlock, or treated as such. He came and went at will, giving no account of either his comings or his goings. He did precisely as he pleased, and so did his host, neither ever thinking it necessary to offer an apology for leaving the other alone for a day or for a week, as the case might be. Pollard had his own quarters in the rambling old house, with perfect liberty for their best furnishing. Often the two friends became

interested together in a single subject of literary or historical study, and would pore over piles of books in the great hallway if it rained, and out under the spreading trees on the lawn if the weather were fair. Often, on the other hand, their moods would take different courses, and for days together they would scarcely see each other except at meal-times. Theirs was a friendship that trusted itself implicitly.

"It's an ideal friendship, this of yours and mine," said Marshall, in his dreamy way, one day. "It never interferes with the perfect liberty of either. What a pity it is that it must come to an end!"

"But why should it come to an end?" asked his less introspective friend.

"O, because one or the other of us will presently take to himself a wife," was the answer.

"But why should that make a difference? It will not if I am the one to marry first. That will only make your life at Warlock the pleasanter for you. It will give you two devoted friends instead of one."

"It will do nothing of the kind," answered Pollard, with that confidence of tone which sug-

gests that a matter has been completely thought out. "Our friendship is based upon the fact that we both care more for each other than for anybody else. When you get married, you'll naturally and properly care more for your wife than for me. You'd be a brute if you didn't, and I'd quarrel with you. After your marriage we shall continue to be friends, of course, but not in the old way. I'll come to Warlock whenever I please, and go away whenever it suits me to go, just as I do now. But I shall make my bow to my lady when I come, and my adieus to her when I take my departure. I'll enjoy doing that, because I know that your wife will be a charming person, worthy of your devotion to her. But it will not be the same as now. And it will be best so. 'Male and female created he them,' and it would be an abominable shame if you were to remain single for many years to come. It is your duty, and it will presently be your highest pleasure to make some loving and lovable woman as happy as God intended her to be. Better than that — the love of a good woman will make your life richer and worthier than it is now. It will ennoble you, and fit you for the life that your good qual-

ities destine you to lead. You see I've been studying your case, Baillie, and I've made up my mind that there never was a man who needed to marry more than you do. You're a thoroughly good fellow now — but that's about all. You'll be something mightily better than that, when you have the inspiration of a good woman's love to spur you out of your present egotistic self-content, and give you higher purposes in life than those of the well-bred, respectable citizen that you are. You pay your debts; you take excellent care of your negroes; you serve your neighbours as an unpaid magistrate and all that, and it is all very well. But you are capable of much higher things, and when you get yourself a wife worthy of you, you'll rise to a new level of character and conduct."

"And how about you?" the friend asked.

"O, as for me, I don't count. You see, I'm that anomalous thing, a Virginian who doesn't ride horses or care for sport. I'm abnormal. Women like me in a way, and the more elderly ones among them do me the honour to approve me. But that is all. Young women are apt to fall in love with robuster young fellows."

"But you are robust," quickly answered Baillie, "and altogether manly."

"No, I'm not. I'm physically strong enough, of course, but strength isn't all of robustness. I can lift as much as you can, but I don't like to lift, and you do. I can jump as high, but I don't like to jump, while you do. When we were canoeing in Canada a year ago, I could shoot a rapid as well as you, but I'd very much rather have walked down the bank, leaving the guide to navigate the canoe, while you often sent the guide about his business and rebuked his impertinence in offering help where you wanted to do your own helping of yourself without any interference on his part. I remember that just as we were starting on the long and difficult journey to the Lake of the Woods, you dismissed the whole crew of half-breed hangers-on, and we set out alone. I would never have done that, greatly as I detested the unclean company. I went with you, of course, but I went relying upon you for guidance, just as I should have gone relying upon the half-breeds if you had not been with me. We two are differently built, I tell you. Now, even here at Warlock, I send for Sam when I want

my studs changed from one shirt to another, while only this morning you cleaned your own boots rather than wait for Sam after you had whistled for him thrice. I don't think I'm lazier than you are, and I know I'm not more afraid of anything. But you rejoice in toilsome journeys, while I prefer to take them easily, hiring other people to do the hard work. You relish danger just as you do red pepper, while I prefer safety and a less pungent seasoning. Now, young women of our kind and class prefer your kind of man to my kind, and so you are likely to marry, while I am not. Another thing. I saw you throw aside a copy of Shakespeare the other day without even marking your place in the volume, because a company of gentlewomen had driven up to visit your aunt, and you completely forgot your Shakespeare in thinking of the gentlewomen. Now I, in a like case, should have edged a little farther around the tree, read on to the end of the scene, marked my place, and only then have discovered that the gentlewomen had driven up. Women like your ways better than mine, and they are entirely right."

In all this, Marshall Pollard exaggerated some-

what, in playful fashion, and to his own discrediting. But in the main his analysis of the difference between himself and his friend was quite correct.

It was to this friend that Baillie Pegram spoke of the note he had received from The Oaks ladies, saying that it read "like a joint note from the Powers to the Grand Turk."

"Tell me about it," answered Marshall.

"O, read it for yourself," Baillie replied, handing him the sheet. "The stilted ceremoniousness of it," he presently added, "is easy enough to understand, but I can't, for the life of me, see why the good ladies of The Oaks felt it incumbent upon themselves to write to me at all. They are always scrupulously attentive to forms and conventionalities when discharging any obligation of courtesy, and in this case they have had the rather embarrassing duty imposed upon them of telling me not to call upon their niece, who is also their guest. That sufficiently accounts for the stiff formality of their rhetoric, and their scrupulous attention to the niceties of courtesy in the embarrassing case, but —"

"Remember, also," broke in Marshall Pollard,

"that they are 'maiden ladies,' while you, my dear, unsuspicious boy, are a particularly marriageable young man."

"Don't talk nonsense, Marshall; this is a serious matter," answered Baillie.

"It isn't nonsense at all that I'm talking," said his friend. "I'm speaking only words of 'truth and soberness.' The Misses Sarah and Jane Ronald, as I understand the matter, are highly bred and blue-bloodedly descended Virginia gentlewomen, who happen to be as yet unmarried. Very naturally and properly they adopt a guarded manner in addressing a missive to a peculiarly marriageable young gentleman like you, lest their intentions be misinterpreted."

"Why, they are old enough," Baillie replied, "to be my grandmothers!"

"True," answered the other, "but you wouldn't venture to suggest that fact to the mind of either of them, would you, Baillie?"

"Certainly not, but —"

"Certainly not. And certainly they in their turn do not give special weight to that fact. When will you learn to understand women a little bit, Baillie? Don't you know that no woman

ever thinks of herself as too old or too ugly or too unattractive to fascinate a young man? Especially no well-bred spinster, accustomed to be courted in her youth, and treated with deference in her middle age, ever realises that she is so old as to be privileged to lay aside those reserves with which she was trained in youth to guard her maidenly modesty against the ugly imputation of a desire to 'throw herself at the head' of a young gentleman possessed of good manners, good looks, an old family name, and a plantation of five or six thousand acres? Now, don't let your vanity run away with you, my boy. I do not mean for one moment to suggest that either of The Oaks ladies would think of accepting an offer of marriage from you or anybody else. I am too gallant to imagine that they have not had abundant opportunities of marriage in their day. At the same time, propriety is propriety, you know, and the conduct of an 'unattached female' cannot be too carefully guarded against the possibility of misinterpretation."

Baillie laughed, and presently fell into silence for a space. Finally his companion lazily said:

"It is time for you to be off, if you are going."

"Going where?"

"Why, to dine at The Oaks, of course. You are invited for the third Friday of each month, if I understand the matter correctly, and this is the third Friday of April, I believe."

"Why, so it is. I hadn't thought of the date. By Jove, I'll go! There's just a chance that she hasn't started yet."

"It's awkward, of course," said Pollard, in his meditative, philosophical way, "especially with this war coming on. But these things never will adjust themselves to circumstances in a spirit of rationality and accommodation."

"What on earth do you mean, Marshall? I don't understand."

"Of course not. The bird caught in the net of the fowler does not usually see just what is the matter with him."

"But Marshall —"

"O, I'll explain as well as I can. I mean only that you are in love with Agatha Ronald. Of course you're totally unconscious of your state of mind, but you'll find it out after awhile. It is an utterly irrational state of mind for you to be in, but the malady often takes that form, I

believe, and I've done you a service in telling you about it, for as a rule a man never finds out what's the matter with him in such a case until some friend tells him. He just goes on making a fool of himself until somebody else jogs his elbow with information which he alone has need of. Now suppose you tell me all about this case. What is it that stands between you and the young lady?"

Again Baillie laughed. But this time the laugh was accompanied by a tell-tale flushing of the face.

"The whole thing is ridiculous," he presently said. "It couldn't have happened anywhere but in this dear old Virginia of ours. I'll tell you all I know about it. My grandfather whom I never saw in my life, and Miss Agatha Ronald's father, who died before she was born, were friends, like you and me. They owned adjoining plantations, — Warlock and The Oaks, both held by original grants to their great-grandfathers, made in the early colonial times. But the county clerk's office burned up, a generation or two ago, and with it all the records that could show where the boundaries between these two plantations lay. In

trying to determine those boundaries one unlucky day, when both had probably taken too much or too little Madeira for dinner, the two irascible old gentlemen fell into a dispute as to where the boundary line should run through a wretched little scrap of ground down there on Nib's Creek, which never had been cultivated, never has been, and never will be. The thing was not worth a moment's thought in itself, but the gout got into it, or in some other way the two absurd old gentlemen's dignity got itself involved, and so they quarrelled. If there had been time, they would have laughed the thing off presently over a mint-julep. But unhappily one of them died, and that made a permanent family quarrel of the dispute. All the womenkind took it up as an inherited feud, which made it impossible that any Pegram should have aught to do with any Ronald, or any Ronald with any Pegram. So much, it was held, was due to the tender memory of the dead. But, after our Virginian tradition, the individual members of both families have been held bound to treat each other with the extreme of formal but quite unfriendly courtesy. That is why I have been required,

from my fifteenth birthday onward, to dine at The Oaks on the third Friday of every month when I happened to be in the county on that day. I had only the vaguest notion of the situation until last Christmas, when circumstances brought it to my attention. Then I made my good Aunt Catherine tell me all about it. When I learned what the matter in dispute was, I sent for the family lawyer, and ordered him to make out a deed to The Oaks ladies, conveying all my right, title, and interest in the disputed piece of land to them 'for and in consideration of the sum of one dollar in hand paid, receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged.' I sent the deed to The Oaks ladies, with a perhaps too effusive note, asking them to accept it as an evidence of my desire to make an end of a quarrel which had long alienated those who should have remained friends."

"What an idiot you made of yourself by doing that!" broke in young Pollard.

"Of course, and I soon found it out. The Oaks ladies wrote that they had never, by any act or word, recognised the existence of a quarrel; that if such quarrel existed, it lay between the

dead, who had not authorised them or me to adjust it; and that they, holding only a life interest in The Oaks, by virtue of their 'poor brother's' kindly will, were not authorised either to alienate any part of the fee, or to add to it, by deed of gift or otherwise; that their 'poor brother' had never been accustomed to accept gifts of land or of anything else from others, and finally that they were sure his spirit would not sanction the purchase, for the miserable consideration of one dollar, of a piece of land which, till the time of his death, he had believed to be absolutely his own. There was no use arguing such a case or explaining it. So I have let it rest, and have gone once a month to dine with The Oaks ladies, as a matter of duty. It's all absurd, but —"

"But it interferes with your interest in Miss Agatha," broke in the friend. "Take my advice, and don't let it. Off with you to The Oaks, and ten to one you'll find the young lady still there. The date of her departure was not fixed when this diplomatic note was despatched, and as you were not expected to receive the communication for a week to come, she is probably still there. If so, by the way, please don't mention my presence at

Warlock. You see — well, I have met the young lady at her grandfather's, and properly I ought to pay my respects to her, now that she's a guest on a plantation adjoining that on which I am staying. But I don't want to. Your saddle-horses jolt so confoundedly, and besides, I've discovered up-stairs a copy of old T. Gordon's seventeenth century translation of Tacitus, with his essays on that author, and his bitter-tongued comments on all preceding translations of his favourite classic. I want an afternoon with the old boy."

"You certainly are a queer fellow, Marshall," said Baillie.

"How so? Because I like old books? Or is it because I don't like the jolting of your horses?"

"Why haven't you told me that you knew Miss Agatha Ronald?"

"I have told you — within the last minute."

"But why didn't you tell me before?"

"O, well, — perhaps I didn't think of it. Never mind that. It is time for you to be off, unless you want the soup and your welcome to grow cold while waiting for you."

When Baillie had ridden away, Marshall Pollard sat idly for a time in the porch. Then tossing aside the book he had been holding in his hand but not reading, he rose and went to his room. There he searched among his belongings for a little Elzevir volume, and took from between its leaves a sprig of dried yellow jessamine.

"It is a poisonous flower," he said, as he tossed it out of the window. "She warned me of that when I took it from her hand. She was altogether right."

Apparently pursuing a new-born purpose, the young man returned to the porch, broke off a sprig of honeysuckle leaves — for the vine was not yet in flower — and carefully placed it between the pages of the Elzevir.

"The honeysuckle," he said to himself, "is unlike the yellow jessamine. It is sweet and wholesome. So is the friendship of the man from whose vine I have plucked it."

IV

In revolt

WHEN Agatha reached The Oaks, mounted upon Baillie Pegram's mare, her reception at the hands of her aunts was one of almost stunned astonishment. The two good ladies had learned an hour before her coming that she had ridden away alone that morning while yet they had slept, and they had carefully prepared a lecture upon that exceeding impropriety, for delivery on the young woman's return.

But when they saw her dismount from Baillie Pegram's mare, they were well-nigh speechless with horror at her depravity. The deliverance that had been so carefully prepared for her chastening no longer met the requirements of the case. A new and far severer rebuke must be extemporised, and the necessity of that was an additional offence on the part of the young woman who had forced it upon them. They were

not accustomed to speak extemporaneously on any subject of importance. To do so involved the danger of saying too much, or saying it less effectively than they wished, or — worse still — leaving unsaid things that they very much wished to say. In response to their horrified questionings, Agatha made the simplest and most direct statement possible.

"The morning was fine, and I wanted to ride. I rode as far as Dogwood Branch. There my poor horse — the one that my grandfather sent down for me to ride while here — met with a mishap. His foot went through a hole in the bridge, and in his struggle to extricate it, he broke his leg. Mr. Pegram came along and released the poor beastie's foot, but it was too late. So he insisted upon my taking his mare, and showed me that I couldn't refuse. He sent his servant to ride on a mule behind me in case I should have trouble with his only partially broken mare. He promised to put my poor horse out of his misery. There. That's all there is to tell."

The little speech was made in a tone and with a manner that suggested difficult self-restraint.

When it was ended the two good aunts sat for a full minute looking at the girl with eyes that were eloquent of reproach — a reproach that for the moment could find no fit words for its expression. At last the torrent came — not with a rushing violence of speech, but with a steady, overwhelming flow. The girl stood still, seemingly impassive.

"Will you not be seated?" presently asked Aunt Sarah.

"If you don't mind, I prefer to stand," she answered, in the gentlest, most submissive tone imaginable, for Agatha — angry and outraged — was determined to maintain her self-control to the end. Her gentle submissiveness of seeming deceived her censors to their undoing. Satisfied that they might rebuke her to their hearts' content, they proceeded, adding one word of bitter reproach and condemnation to another, and waxing steadily stronger in their righteous wrath. Still the girl stood like a soldier under a fire which he is forbidden to return. Still she controlled her countenance and restrained herself from speech. Only a slight flushing of the face,

and now and then a tremor of the lip, gave indication of emotion of any kind.

Not until the storm had completely expended its wrath upon her head did Agatha Ronald open her lips. Then she spoke as Agatha Ronald:

"Will you please order my carriage to be ready for me on Saturday morning, Aunt Sarah? My maid is too ill to travel to-morrow or the next day. But by Saturday morning she will be well enough, and I shall begin my journey to Willoughby at nine o'clock, if you will kindly order a cup of coffee served half an hour before the usual breakfast-time on Saturday."

She departed instantly from the room, giving no time or opportunity for reply or remonstrance.

"Perhaps we have spoken too severely, Jane," said Aunt Sarah.

Perhaps they had. At any rate, it had been Agatha's purpose to remain a full month longer at The Oaks before beginning the long homeward carriage journey which alone Colonel Archer permitted to his grandchild. Railroads were new in those days, and Colonel Archer had not reconciled himself to them.

"They are convenient for carrying freight,"

he said, "but a young lady isn't freight. She should travel in her own carriage."

Later in the day Agatha reappeared, as gentle and smiling as usual, and as attentive as ever to the comfort of her aunts. Her manner was perfect in its docility, for she had decided that so long as she should remain under their roof, it was her duty to herself, and incidentally to her aunts, to minister in every way she could to their pleasure, and to obey their slightest indicated wishes implicitly. They were misled somewhat by her manner, which they construed to be an indication of submission.

"You will surely not think of leaving us on Saturday, dear, now that you have thought the matter over calmly," said Aunt Sarah; "and perhaps we spoke too severely this morning. But you will overlook that, I am sure, in view of the concern we naturally feel for your bringing up."

A bitter and convincing speech was on the girl's lips ready for delivery, — a speech in which she should declare her independence, and assert her right as a woman fully grown to determine her conduct for herself within the limits of perfect

innocence, — but she drove it back into her heart, and restrained her utterance to the single sentence:

"I shall begin my journey on Saturday morning."

Agatha Ronald was in revolt against an authority which she deemed oppressive, and such revolt was natural enough on the part of a daughter of Virginia whose ancestry included three signers of the Declaration of Independence, and at least half a dozen fighting soldiers of the Revolution. It was in her blood to resent and resist injustice and to defy the authority that decreed injustice. But after the fashion of those revolutionary ancestors of hers, she would do everything with due attention to "a decent respect for the opinions of mankind." She had decided to quit The Oaks because she could not and would not longer submit to a discipline which she felt to be arbitrary, unreasonable, and unjust. But she was determined to be as gentle and as gentlewomanly as possible in the manner of her leaving. It was her fixed purpose never again to visit that plantation — her birthplace — until she should be summoned thither to take posses-

sion as its sole inheritor, but she let slip no hint of this determination to distress her aunts, who, after all, meant only kindness to her by their severity.

"I'll say nothing about it," she resolved. "I'll just go back to Chummie. He understands me, and I'll never leave him again."

V

At the Oaks

WHEN Baillie Pegram rode into The Oaks grounds on that third Friday of April, 1861, the first person he encountered was none other than Agatha. She was gowned all in white, except that she had tied a cherry-coloured ribbon about her neck. She was wholly unbonneted, and was armed with a little gardening implement — hoe on one side and miniature rake on the other. She was busy over a flower-bed, and the young man, rounding a curve in the shrubbery, came upon her, to the complete surprise of both.

The situation might have been embarrassing but for the ease and perfect self-possession with which the girl accepted it. She greeted her visitor, to his astonishment, without any of the hauteur that had marked her demeanour on the occasion of their last previous meeting. Here at

The Oaks she felt herself under the entirely adequate protection of her aunts. She had therefore no occasion to stand upon the defensive. Out there at the bridge she had been herself solely responsible for her conduct, and dependent upon herself for the maintenance of her dignity. Here Mr. Baillie Pegram was the guest of her people, while out there he had been a person casually and unwillingly encountered, and not on any account to be permitted any liberty of intercourse. Besides all these conclusive differences of circumstance, there was the additional fact that Agatha was in revolt against authority, and very strongly disposed to maintain her perfect freedom of innocent action. So she gave her visitor a garden-gloved hand as he dismounted, and slowly walked with him toward the house.

"I attended an opera once," she chattered, "when I was a very little girl. I remember that I thought the basso a porpoise, and the tenor a conceited popinjay, and the prima donna a fat woman, but I fell completely in love with the haymakers in the chorus. So whenever I go gardening I find myself instinctively trying to make myself look as like them as I can. That, I

suppose, is why I tied a red ribbon about my neck this morning."

Here Baillie Pegram missed an opportunity to make a particularly gallant and flattering speech. To any other woman, under like circumstances, he would have said something of her success in making a charmingly attractive picture of herself. But there was much of reverence in his admiration for Agatha, and he felt that a merely complimentary speech addressed to her would be a frivolous impertinence. So instead he asked:

"Do you often go out gardening?"

"O, yes, always when the weather permits, and sometimes when it forbids. At Willoughby I've often gone out in a waterproof to train my flowers and vines. I'm just going away from The Oaks, and I've been digging up a hideously formal bed which the gardener's soul delights in, and sowing mixed portulaca instead of the priggish plants. Portulaca smiles at you, you know, when you get up soon enough in the morning to see it in its glory. But I'll never see the smiles in this case."

"But why not?"

"Why, I'm leaving The Oaks on Saturday,

you know, — or rather you do not know, — and I'm not coming back for a long, long time."

"May I again presume to ask why not?"

"O, well, I must go to my grandfather. If I don't he'll enlist or join a company, or get a commission, or whatever else it is that a man does when he makes a soldier out of himself. You see I'm the only person who can manage my grandfather."

"But surely, at his age — "

"O, yes, I know. He's over eighty now, but you don't know him very well, or you'd understand. He was a soldier under Jackson at New Orleans, and a colonel in the Mexican War, and he'll go into this war, too, if I don't go home and tell him he mustn't. I'm going to-morrow morning."

Manifestly the girl wanted to chatter. Women often do that when they are anxious to avoid serious conversation. If men never do it, it is only because they lack the intellectual alertness necessary. They hem and haw, and make stupid remarks about the weather instead, and succeed only in emphasising the embarrassment which a

woman would completely bury under charming chatter.

"You haven't seen my aunts yet, I suppose?" Miss Agatha presently asked.

"No. I'm just arriving at The Oaks. I dine here, you know, on the third Friday of every month."

"Yes — so I've heard. I don't think the aunties expected you to-day. They'll be glad to see you, of course, but I think they thought you were still in Richmond."

Baillie wondered if this was a covert rebuke to him for having ventured upon the premises while Agatha was still there. The girl was not altogether an easy person to understand. In any case her remark revealed the fact that the question of his coming had been discussed in the house and decided in the negative. It was with some embarrassment, therefore, that he presented himself to those formidable personages, The Oaks ladies, and tried to treat his own coming quite as a matter of course. But if his presence was in any wise unwelcome to them, there was nothing in their demeanour to suggest the fact. They expressed no surprise whatever, and only a placid,

well-bred self-congratulation that absence had not deprived them of the pleasure of his company at dinner, as they had feared that it might. Then one of them added:

"It is unfortunate that Agatha is to dine at The Forest to-day, with our cousins, the Misses Blair. By the way," tinkling a bell, "it is time to order the carriage, and for you to change your gown, Agatha, dear."

Baillie Pegram happened to catch sight of the young girl's face as these words were spoken, and he read there enough of surprise to convince him that if it had been previously arranged for her to drive to The Forest for dinner, she at least had heard nothing of the matter until now. But whether the surprise reflected in her face was one of pleasure or the reverse, she gave him no chance to guess. She merely glanced at the tall and slowly ticking clock, and said:

"I'll go at once, auntie. I did not know it was so late. Excuse the abruptness of my leave-taking, Mr. Pegram, and let me say good-bye, for I leave for Willoughby to-morrow morning."

It was all an admirable bit of acting — the more admirable, Baillie thought, for the reason

that the scene had been suddenly extemporised and not rehearsed — for he was satisfied that Agatha at least had been completely surprised by the announcement that she was to dine at The Forest that day.

Unfortunately the acting was destined to be wasted, for almost immediately after Agatha's departure for her chamber, a carriage drove up, and Baillie gallantly assisted Miss Blair herself to alight from it. She greeted her cousins of The Oaks effusively in the ceaseless speech with which it was her practice to meet and greet her friends.

"Isn't it good of me, Cousin Sarah and Cousin Jane? I had a positive headache to-day, but I was determined to drive over and dine with you, so as to bid Agatha good-bye. Where is the dear child? You see we heard only this morning that she had changed her plans and was going to leave us to-morrow. So I just had to come and dine" — and so forth, through a speech that fortunately gave The Oaks ladies time a-plenty in which to collect their wits and avoid all appearance of discomfiture.

"You are always so good and thoughtful,"

said Miss Sarah, as soon as Miss Blair left a little hole in her conversation. "We knew you'd want to see Agatha before she left, and we were just planning to send her to you for dinner. In fact she's gone up to dress. But this is *so* much better, particularly as we have Mr. Baillie Pegram with us, too. This is his regular day, you know, and he is always so mindful of his engagements. We had feared we should miss seeing him to-day, as he was away in Richmond; but he got home in time, and he never fails us when within reach. He has an admirable habit of punctuality which the other young men of our rather lax time might emulate with advantage."

Here was Baillie Pegram's opportunity, but he missed it. If he had possessed one-half or one-tenth the tact that Agatha had shown fifteen minutes before, he would have protested that, much to his regret, he could not remain to dinner that day, as he had a guest of his own at Warlock, and had ridden over only to make his apologies and express his regret. But Baillie Pegram, not being a woman, did not think of the right thing to say until it was one full minute too late, where-

fore, of course, it would not do for him to say it at all.

What a pity it is that men can't be women — sometimes! Just for lack of that tact which is instinctive in a woman, the master of Warlock was doomed to dine that day under a sense of intrusion on his part, which certainly did not contribute to his enjoyment of the dinner or the company. But he had only himself to blame, and, like the resolute fellow that he was, he determined to bear the consequences of his blundering stupidity with the best grace he could. He professed the keenest delight in the unexpected pleasure of having Miss Blair for his fellow guest, adding, with an obeisance to The Oaks ladies, "Though of course one needs no other company than that of our hostesses themselves, to make the day of a dinner at The Oaks altogether delightful."

Obviously the young man was improving in tactfulness under the stimulus of circumstances.

When dinner was served half an hour later, he gave his arm to Miss Sarah, and entered the stately but gloomy old dining-room, with its high-backed, carved mahogany chairs, its stained-glass

cathedral windows, and its general atmosphere of solemnity and depression, with such grace as a resolute spirit could command. He managed to taste the dishes as they were served, and to carve without a mishap of any kind, but in the matter of conversation he was certainly not brilliant, though he had the approaching war for his theme.

After the old English custom which survived in Virginia, the wine — a rich old Madeira — was not served until the dessert was removed. Then it came on with the cigars. The ladies sipped a single glass each, and rose, whereupon the young man gallantly held open the great door, bowing as the womankind took their departure.

When they had gone, there being no gentleman present except himself, young Pegram was left alone with the wine, the cigars, a single wax candle for cigar-lighting purposes, — and Henry. Henry was the perfectly trained butler of the establishment, a butler taught from childhood, by his late master, to comport himself always with the dignity of a diplomat who has dined. He stood bolt upright behind the young man's chair, eager to anticipate every want, and anticipating them all without a false movement or any sugges-

tion of hurry. Henry had presided as butler in his late master's establishment when that master kept "open house" as a distinguished senator in Washington, and it was the serving-man's boast that he "knew what a gentleman wants and when he wants it."

But Henry's very propriety became irksome to Baillie Pegram presently. It reminded him of his own lack of any ease except a forcibly assumed one. "Henry feels himself in his proper place," the young man reflected. "I do not."

It was not the young man's habit to take more than a glass or two of wine after dinner, and on this occasion he had no relish even for that small allowance. Yet he sat with it for a sufficient time to show proper respect for the hospitality of the house. He held his glass up between him and the stained-glass windows, and went through all the motions of watching the play of colours through the amber liquid, quite as if his relish for it had been that of a confirmed *bon vivant*. Finally he lighted a fresh cigar, and said to Henry: "It is quite warm. I think I'll finish my cigar out among the shrubbery. Please

say to the ladies that I'll join them within half an hour."

He was not destined, however, to fulfil this promise. For, as he passed out into the shrubbery, he encountered Miss Agatha by an accident which that young lady had in all probability arranged with the utmost care, as women do sometimes. She very much wanted speech with Baillie.

"I want to thank you, Mr. Pegram," she said, eagerly, "for not making a scene. It was very hard on you — the situation, I mean — and you have spared me at every point. Perhaps you had better take your leave now as quickly as you can."

But the young man's courage had completely come back to him, with something of the daredevil spirit added to it: as the soldier beset, sometimes comes to relish danger for its own sake, and deliberately invites more of it, so Baillie Pegram, knowing perfectly that he had completely outraged the proprieties, as The Oaks ladies interpreted them, was minded to outrage them still further. Having braved the situation to this point, he was determined to brave it out

to the end — whatever the end might be. So to the girl's suggestion, he answered:

"But the day is not over yet, and the piazzas of The Oaks fortunately include one with a western aspect. Let us sit there and enjoy the sunset. We'll join the ladies later."

The girl consented, willingly enough. She was already in revolt, for one thing, and she knew that her aunts would not venture again to censure her severely, after what had happened.

"But you must not misunderstand me, Mr. Pegram," she said, as the two seated themselves in the great oaken chairs fabricated on the plantation during colonial times. "I have declared my independence so far as to insist upon my right to treat you with courtesy upon occasion. But you must not suppose that I have forgotten the gulf that lies between us, and especially you must not interpret my attitude to mean that I am disloyal to the memory of my poor father."

"I quite understand," he answered, meditatively and sadly. "You and I are privileged, by your good pleasure, to treat each other with formal courtesy, but I must not in any way presume upon that privilege beyond its intention."

The girl sat silent, looking wistfully out into the glow that had followed the sunset. Finally she said:

"I suppose that is it. It is a hard situation to deal with — for me."

"And for me," the youth replied.

"Yes, for you, too, I suppose. But neither of us is responsible. We must recognise conditions and do the best we can."

"I quite understand. You give me leave hereafter to behave like a gentleman toward you, whenever circumstances shall happen to force any sort of intercourse upon us; but beyond that you remind me that there is war between your house and mine, and between me and thee. It is not a treaty of peace that you offer, or even a protocol looking to peace; it is only an amenity of war, like a cartel for the exchange of prisoners, or a temporary truce, for the burial of the dead who have fallen between the lines."

This statement of the case did not at all satisfy the bewildered girl's mind, but there was no opportunity to correct it, for at that moment a maid came with a formally polite message to the effect that if Mr. Pegram and Miss Ronald had

quite finished their conversation in the porch, the Misses Ronald and Miss Blair were waiting to receive them in the library.

"After all," Agatha thought, afterward, "I do not know that I could have bettered his definition of the situation. But it isn't one that I like."

All skies seemed serene as the two miscreants entered the library, Baillie making all that was necessary of apology by saying:

"Pardon us, good ladies, I pray you. We have lingered too long in the porch, but you will graciously attribute our fault to the unusual beauty of the sunset. Sunsets mean so much, you know. They suggest the end of pleasant things and the coming of a darkness to which we do not know the dawn. I cannot help thinking that the sunset that Miss Ronald and I have been witnessing is typical. Our beautiful Virginia life is at its sunset. A night-time of war and suffering is approaching, and we cannot know of the day that must follow."

At this point Miss Blair relieved the situation by giving the conversation a thoroughly practical and commonplace turn.

"Why, Mr. Pegram," she exclaimed, "you surely do not doubt the outcome of the war? You confidently expect the triumph of our righteous cause?"

"Well, I hope for it. But the size and the number of the guns will have something to do with the result, and our enemies can put four or five men and four or five guns to our one in the field. It is a dark night that must follow our sunset. We can only do our best, and leave the result to God. Ladies, I bid you good night, and good-bye; for I fear I shall see none of you again soon. I shall be off soldiering almost at once."

VI

Next morning

IF Baillie Pegram imagined that by his parting words he had silenced the batteries of The Oaks ladies, he totally misjudged his enemy. For in spite of his intimation of intent not to dine at The Oaks again, there came to him at breakfast the next morning a little note in which the good ladies calmly reasserted their privilege of deciding such matters for themselves quite irrespective of the wishes or purposes of young persons of whatever sex or degree.

"The Misses Ronald present their respectful compliments to Mr. Baillie Pegram," the note ran, "and beg to say that in view of the terribly disturbed condition of the times, it is their purpose presently to close The Oaks for a season, so far at least as the entertainment of guests is concerned. They may perhaps go upon a journey. As to that,

their plans are as yet unformed, but at any rate it is their purpose not to entertain again for the present, except by special invitation to their nearest intimates. They feel it incumbent upon them to give timely notice of this alteration in the customs of their house to those valued friends who, like Mr. Pegram, have been accustomed to dine at The Oaks at stated intervals.

"With sincere good wishes for Mr. Pegram's safety and good fortune in that soldierly career to which he feels himself summoned by the circumstances of the time, and in full confidence that he is destined to win for himself the laurels that befit one of his distinguished ancestry, The Oaks ladies remain,

"Most respectfully,

"Sarah Ronald,

"Jane Ronald."

Having read the joint note, Baillie passed it to his friend at the other end of the breakfast-table, saying: "Read that, old fellow, and see what has come of following your madcap advice."

Pollard carefully read the letter through, and then asked:

"Well, what of it?"

"Why, don't you see, by going to The Oaks yesterday as you advised, I've managed to get myself forbidden the house."

"Well, what of that? I don't understand that you have any passionate desire to dine with the estimable old ladies every month, and I think you told me last night, when I was trying to get a nap, that Miss Agatha is leaving this morning."

"Yes, of course. But can't you understand that it's a disagreeable and humiliating thing thus to be forbidden the house, just as if I were guilty of some misconduct —"

"O, yes, I understand perfectly. It is exceedingly inconvenient to find yourself at odds with the elderly female relatives of a young gentlewoman to whom you would very much like to pay your addresses. But in this case, I do not see that it complicates matters very much, as you told me yourself yesterday that the case is hopeless — that there is already an impassable barrier between yourself and Miss Agatha Ronald, so what difference does it make? When you've a ten-rail staked and ridered fence in front of you, a rail more or less doesn't signify much. I'll tell you, Baillie,

you must do as I've done. In view of the chances of war, which are apt to worry one who thinks much about them, I have decided to accept and believe the fatalistic philosophy, which teaches that what is to be will be, even if it never happens."

Pegram sat silent for a while before answering. Then he said:

"Be serious for a little if you can, Pollard, I want to talk with you. You were right after all in what you said to me yesterday, though at the time I regarded it as unutterable nonsense. It seems absurd, under the circumstances, but the fact is that — well, that Agatha Ronald has somehow come to mean more to me than any other woman ever did or ever will. Perhaps I shouldn't have found out the fact for a long time to come, if it hadn't been for what you said to me yesterday. But I've found it out now, and I know all that it means to me. It means that I've made a fool of myself, and I must set to work to repair the mistake. Fortunately, the way is open, and that is what I want to say to you. I'm going to leave you to-day. I'm going to Richmond to volunteer in one of the batteries there that are

already organised, armed, and equipped, and nearly ready for the field. They'll be the first sent to the front, and I intend to put myself at the front just as speedily as I can."

"But why not do better than that for yourself?" asked Pollard.

"What better is there that I can do?"

"Why not raise a battery of your own, and command it? You know Governor Letcher, and you have influence in plenty. You can have a captain's commission for the asking."

"I suppose I might. But I am strongly impressed with the fact that there are altogether too many men in like predicament — too many men whose position and influence entitle them to expect commissions while, like me, they know nothing whatever of the military art. We need some privates in this war, and fortunately a good many of us are willing to serve as such. I am, for one. The number of gentlemen in Virginia whose position is as good as my own is quite great enough to officer any army in Europe, and our ignorance of military affairs is great enough to wreck the best army that was ever organised. I'll not add mine to the list. I'll go in as a pri-

vate soldier. If I am ever fit to command, it will be time enough then for me to ask for a commission. I'm going to volunteer in the ranks."

"So am I," answered Pollard.

"What? You? When?"

"Yes. Me. Yesterday."

"Well, go on. Don't be provoking. Tell me all about it. When did you do it, and how, and why? For a generally agreeable young man, I must say, Marshall, you can make of yourself about as disagreeable a person as I ever encountered. Come! Tell me!"

Pollard smiled and meditated, as if planning the order of his utterance. At last he said:

"There isn't much to tell, and I don't know just where to begin. But after — well, after you rode away to The Oaks yesterday, I got to thinking and wondering what I should do with myself now that your companionship was lost to me. There is nobody about for me to fall in love with, and after all, there is a limit to the entertainment to be got out of old T. Gordon and his Tacitus. You see, girls never behave properly toward me. There isn't one of them in ten counties who would ever think of breaking her

horse's leg in a bridge just in time to let me come to her rescue. Besides, I should probably be on foot, with no mare to lend the distressed damsel, and, altogether, you see — "

"Will you stop your nonsense, or will you not?" asked Baillie, with impatience. "Tell me what you did."

"Well, I got Sam to bring me the least objectionable of your abominably jolting saddle-horses — the bay with three white feet and a blaze on the face — and I managed to keep a little breath in my body while riding over to the Court-house. It was my purpose to go to Richmond, and I asked the old ticket agent to send me, but he obstinately refused. He said there were only two trains a day, one at noon and one at midnight. I remonstrated with him, but it was of no use. I explained to him that the *raison d'être* of a railroad — I translated the French to him — was to carry people to whatever place they wished to go to, and at such hours as might suit their convenience. I told him it was an abominable outrage that with a railroad lying there unused, he would not send a gentleman to Richmond without making him wait for eight or ten

hours for the convenience of people whom he knew nothing about. He looked at me rather curiously when I urged that consideration upon him. I think it rather staggered him, but he persisted in his obstinate refusal to send me to Richmond without further delay. He even suggested that I might go somewhere else, but I interpreted that as meaningless profanity, and gently explained to him that I did not wish to go to the place he had mentioned. Then he told me he had no train, and I asked him why he suffered himself to have no train, when a gentleman wanted one and was willing to pay for it."

"*Will* you stop your nonsense, and tell me what happened?" interrupted Baillie.

Pollard smiled, and continued:

"Now, that question of yours reassures me as to the sanity of the station agent. It is closely similar to the question he asked, only, by reason of his lack of cultivation, he interrupted the even and orderly flow of his English with many objurgative and even violent terms, such as we do not employ in ordinary converse, but such as stablemen and innkeepers seem to like to use.

"Despairing of my efforts to secure reasonable

public service at the hands of the railroad, I looked about me, and presently encountered Captain Skinner. You know him, of course — lives at the Kennels, or some such place — keeps a lot of dogs, and drinks a good deal more whiskey than would be good for most men. But he is a West Pointer, you know, and served for a considerable time in the Indian wars. He was at Chapultepec, too, I think. At any rate, he mentioned the fact in connection with his missing arm. He told me he was going to raise a battery in the purlieus of Richmond. He said he didn't want a company of young bloods, but one of soldiers. He proposes to enlist wharf-rats down at Rockett's, and ruffians, and especially jailbirds. 'There are more than a hundred as good men as ever smelt gunpowder or stopped a bullet in its career,' he said, 'now languishing in the Richmond jails and the Virginia State Penitentiary. Governor Letcher promises me that he will pardon all of them who choose to enlist with me, and I'm going to look them over. Those that are fit to make soldiers of, I'll enlist, and after a week or two of drilling I'll have a battery ready for the field.'

"His idea pleased me, so I told him to put me down as the first man on his list. He objected at first. You see, I've had no experience as a ruffian, and I never served a term in jail in my life, but I convinced him that I would make a good cannonier, and he enrolled me. I am to report to him at Rockett's by the day after to-morrow."

To Baillie's remonstrances and pleadings that his friend should choose a company of gentlemen in which to serve, Marshall turned a deaf ear.

"When I become a soldier," he said, "and put myself under another man's command, I want that other man to be one who knows something about the business. Captain Skinner knows what to do with a gun and a gunner, and I've a pretty well-defined notion that most of our coming captains have all that yet to learn, and besides — well, I've given you reasons enough."

"Besides what, Marshall? What were you going to say?"

"O, nothing that you would understand or sympathise with. It's only that somehow I don't want to be in a company of gentlemen turned soldiers, where I should be sure to meet our kind of people on terms of social equality now and

then. As a common soldier, I should find it rather embarrassing at a military ball to have a lady put me on her dancing-list while scornfully refusing a like favour perhaps to the officer who must assign me to guard-duty next morning."

In thus answering, Marshall Pollard equivocated somewhat. He made no mention of the little jessamine and honeysuckle incident, but perhaps there was something behind that which helped to determine his course in choosing Captain Skinner's company for his own, thus placing himself among men wholly without the pale of that society in which sprigs of jessamine are given and cherished, and now and then thrown out of the window. At any rate, the young man seemed disposed to change the course of the conversation.

"Now, Baillie," he said, "you've catechised me quite enough for one morning. Tell me about yourself. Why are you going off to Richmond to enlist in one of the batteries there, instead of joining your neighbours and friends here in organising one or other of the companies they are forming?"

"For the simple reason that I want to be in

the middle of this mix as soon as possible. Those Richmond batteries are already fit to take the field, and they'll be hurling shells at the enemy and dodging shells on their own account before these companies here learn which way a sergeant's chevrons should point. I want to get to the front among the first, that's all."

Sending for Sam, he bade that worthy pack a small saddle valise for him with a few belongings, and when, an hour later, the two friends were ready for their departure, Sam presented himself, clad in his best, and carrying a multitudinous collection of skillets, kettles, and frying-pans, with other and less soldierly belongings. When asked by his master, "What does this mean?" Sam answered, in seeming astonishment at the question:

"Why, Mas' Baillie, you'se a-gwine to de wah, an' of co'se Sam's a-gwine along to take k'yar o' you."

"Of course Sam is going to do no such thing," answered the young man. "Go and put away your pots and pans."

"But, Mas' Baillie," remonstrated the negro boy, in a nearly tearful voice, "who's a-gwine

to take k'yar o' you ef Sam ain't thar? Whose a-gwine to clean yer boots, an' bresh yer clo'se, an' cook yer victuals, an' all that?"

The master was touched by the boy's devotion, though he justly suspected that a yearning for adventure had quite as much to do with Sam's wish to "go to de wah," as his desire to be of service to a kindly master.

"But, Sam," he said, "a common soldier doesn't carry his personal servant with him. If we did that, there wouldn't be enough —"

"A common soldier!" Sam broke in, exercising that privilege of interrupting his master's speech which the personal servants of Virginians always claimed for their own. "A common soldier! Who says Mas' Baillie'll be a common soldier? De mastah of Warlock ain't a common nuffin'. He's a Pegram, he is, an' de Pegrams ain't never been common yit, an' dey ain't a-gwine to be."

"But, Sam," argued his master, "you see we're all going to war. We can't carry our servants with us any more than we can carry our feather beds or our foot-tubs. We must do things for ourselves, now."

"But who's a-gwine to cook your victuals, Mas' Baillie?"

"I reckon I'll have to do that for myself," answered the master.

"What? You? Mas' Baillie Pegram a-gittin' down on his knees in de mud an' a-smuttin' up of his han's an' his face, an' a-wrastlin' with pots an' kittles? Well, I'd jes' like to see you a-doin' of that!"

Baillie was disposed to amuse himself with the boy; so he said:

"But your mammy says you don't know how to cook, Sam, and that you don't seem to know how to learn."

This staggered Sam for an instant, but he promptly rose to the emergency.

"I kin 'splain all dat, Mas' Baillie. You see, I'se done been a-foolin' o' mammy. Mammy, she's de head cook at Warlock; she's a-gittin' old, an' de rheumatiz an' de laziness is a-gittin' into her bones. So she's done tried to make Sam take things offen her shoulders. But I'se done see de situation. I'se watched mammy so long dat I kin cook anything from a Brunswick stew to an omelette sufferin', jes' as good as mammy

kin. But it 'ud never 'a' done to let her know that, else she'd 'a' shouldered the whole thing onter Sam. So when she done set me to watch somethin' she's a-cookin' while she's busy with somethin' else, I jes' had to let it spile some way, in self-defence. Of co'se, I had to run out'n de kitchen after that, a-dodgin' o' de pots an' kittles mammy throwed at my head — an' sometimes I didn't dodge quick enough, either — but de result was de same. Mammy was sure I couldn't cook, an' dat's what she done tole you, Mas' Baillie. But I kin cook, sho'. An' please, Mas' Baillie, you'll let me go 'long wid you?"

The time was growing short now, and Baillie sent the boy away, saying:

"If I ever get to be an officer, Sam, and am allowed a servant, I'll send for you. But you'd better learn all you can about cooking while we're waiting for that."

Sam was disconsolate. He went to the detached kitchen building — for no Virginian ever suffered cooking to be carried on within fifty feet of his dwelling — and sat down and buried his face in his hands and rocked himself backward and forward, moaning dismally.

"I'd jes' like to know," he muttered to the pickaninnies, standing by in their simple costume of long shirts and nothing else, "I'd jes' like to know what's a-gwine to become o' dis here Warlock plantation an' dese here niggas, now dat Mas' Baillie's done gone off to git hisself killed in de wah. De chinch-bug is a-gwine to eat de wheat dis summer sho'. De watermillions is a-gwine to run all to vines. De 'bacca worms an' de grasshoppas is a-gwine to chew up all de terbacca befo' men gits a chawnce at it. De crows is a-gwine to pull up all de cawn — an' dey might as well, too, fer ef dey didn't, it 'ud wither in de rows. Don't yer understan', you stupid little niggas, you'se a-gwine to stawve to death, you is, an' you better believe it. Mas' Baillie's done gone to git hisself killed, I tells you, an' you'se got a mighty short time till yer stomicks gits empty an' shet up an' crampy like. You'se a-gwine to stawve to death, sho', an' it'll hurt wus'n as ef you'd a-swallered a quart o' black cherries 'thout swallerin' none o' de seeds fer safety."

By this time all the young negroes were wailing bitterly, and they would not be comforted

until Sam's mammy set out a kettle of pot-liquor, and gave them pones of ash-cake to crumble into it. After that, Sam's prophecies of evil departed from their inconstant minds. But Sam did not recover so quickly. For days afterward he moped in melancholy, occasionally stretching his big eyes to their utmost while he solemnly delivered some dismal prophecy of evil to come.

VII

A FAREWELL AT THE GATE

WHEN the two friends reached the outer gates of Warlock plantation on their way to the Court-house, Marshall, to whose queer ways his friend was thoroughly well used, called a halt.

"Let us dismount," he said, "and consider what we are doing."

When they had seated themselves upon the carpet of pine-needles, the meditative youth resumed:

"Does it occur to you, Baillie," he asked, "that when you and I pass through yonder gate, we shall leave behind us for ever the most enjoyable life that it ever fell to the lot of human beings to lead? Do you realise that we may never either of us come back through that gate again, and that if we do, it will only be to find all things changed? We are at the end of a chapter. The next chapter will be by no means like unto it."

"I confess I don't quite understand," answered the less meditative one.

"Well, this easy-going, delightful Virginian life of ours has no counterpart anywhere on this continent or elsewhere in the world, and we have decided to put an end to it. For this war is going to be a very serious thing to us Virginians. Virginia is destined to be the battle-field. Greater armies than have ever before been dreamed of on this continent are going to trample over her fields, and meet in dreadful conflict on the margins of her watercourses. Her homes are going to be desolated, her fields laid waste, her substance utterly exhausted, and her people reduced to poverty in a cause that is not her own, and in behalf of which she unselfishly risks all for the sake of an abstraction, and in defence of a right on the part of other States which Virginia herself had seen no occasion to assert in her own defence. Whatever else happens in this war, all that is characteristic in Virginian life, all that is peculiar to it, all that lends loveliness to it, must be sacrificed on the altar of duty.

"I don't at all know how the change is to come about, or what new things are destined to replace

the old; but I see clearly that the old must give way to something new. Perhaps, after all, that is best. Ours has been a beautiful life, and a peculiarly picturesque one, but it is not in tune with this modern industrial world. It has its roots in the past, and the past cannot endure. We have thus far been able to go on living in an ideal world, but the real world has been more and more asserting itself, and even if no war were coming on to upset things, things must be upset. Railroads and telegraphs have come to us rather in spite of our will than by reason of it. We have realised their convenience in a fashion, but they are still foreign and antagonistic to our ideas. The older gentlemen among us still prefer to make long journeys on horseback rather than go by rail, while very many of them insist resolutely upon sending their womankind always in private carriages, even when they go long distances to the mountains for the summer.

"We are living in the past and fighting off the present, but the present will successfully assert itself in the end. You have yourself rejected all the overtures of the speculators who have wanted

to open coal mines on Warlock plantation, but the time will come when you'll be glad to be made richer than any Pegram ever dreamed of being by the sinking of mine shafts among your lawn trees.

"If you are lucky enough to survive this war, you'll see a new labour system established, and learn to regard the men who work for you, not as your dependents, for whom you are responsible, and for whose welfare you feel a sympathetic concern, but as so many 'employees,' to be dealt with through a trades union, and kept down to the lowest scale of wages consistent with their living and working.

"I am not advocating the new, or condemning the old. I am only pointing out the fact that the new is surely destined to triumph over the old, and replace it.

"The negroes in Virginia are beyond question the best paid, the best fed, the best housed, and altogether the best cared for labouring population on earth. They are secure in childhood and in old age and in illness, as no other labouring people on earth are. They are happy, and in important ways they are even freer than any

other labouring class ever was. But they are slaves, and modern thought insists that they would be better off as free men, even though freedom should bring to them a loss of happiness and a loss of that well-nigh limitless liberty which they enjoy as bondsmen, under care of kindly masters.

"Mind you, Baillie, I am not arguing for or against the claims of modern thought. I am only pointing out the fact that it is resistless, and will have its way. All history teaches that. Even chivalry, armed as it was from head to heel, and limitlessly courageous as it was, could not hold its own against commercialism, when commercialism became dominant as the thought that represented the aspirations of men. Not even prejudice or sentiment can prevail against progress.

"John Ruskin is even now protesting in the name of æsthetics against the scarring of England with railroad embankments, and the pollution of England's air with the vomitings of unsightly factory chimneys; but neither the extension of the British railway system nor the multiplication of British factories halts because of his protests.

"Henry Clay was never so eloquent as when

pleading against protective tariffs as something that threatened this country with a system like that of Manchester, in which men were divided into mill owners and mill operatives, with antagonistic interests; yet Henry Clay was forced by the conditions of his time to become the apostle of industrial protection by tariff legislation.

"My thesis is that no man and no people can for long stand in the way of what the Germans call the *zeitgeist* — the spirit of the age. Neither, I think, can any people stand apart from that spirit and let it pass them by. That is what we Virginians have been trying to do. The time has come when we are going out to fight the *zeitgeist,* and the *zeitgeist* is going to conquer us."

"You expect the South to fail in the war, then?" asked Baillie.

"I don't know. We may fail or we may win. But in either case the old régime in the Old Dominion will be at an end when the war is over. Virginia will become a modern State, whatever else happens, and the old life in which you and I were brought up will become a thing of the past, a matter of history, the memory of which

the novelists may love to recall, but the conditions of which can never again be established.

"Fortunately, none of these things needs trouble us. They make no difference whatever in our personal duty. Virginia has proclaimed her withdrawal from the Union, under the declared purpose of the Union to make war upon her for doing so. It is for us to fight in Virginia's cause as manfully as we can, leaving God, or the Fates, or whatever else it is that presides over human affairs, to take care of the result.

"Come! The time is passing; we must hurry in order to catch that train which represents the modern progress that is destined to ride over us and crush us. Good-bye, old Virginia life! God bless you for a good old life! May we live as worthily in the new, if we survive to see the new!"

VIII

A RED FEATHER

THE sun shone with the fervent heat of noonday in mid-July, as the long line of cannon and caissons came lumbering down the incline of the roadway that leads from the mountainside into the little railway village. The breath of the guns was still offensively sulphurous, for there had been no time in which to cleanse them since their work of yesterday. The officers and non-commissioned officers on their horses, and the cannoniers who rode upon the ammunition-chests, were powder-grimed and dusty — for there had been no opportunity on this hurried march for those ablutions that all soldiers so eagerly delight in.

There were no shouted commands given, for this battery had been three times under fire, and one of the first things an officer learns in real war is not to shout his orders except when the

din of battle renders shouting necessary. Three months ago on parade the captain of this battery would have bellowed, "Forward into battery!" by way of impressing his importance upon the lookers-on. Now that he had learned to be in earnest, he merely turned to his bugler, and said, as if in a parlour, "Forward into battery, then halt."

A little musical snatch on the bugle did the rest, and with the precision of a piece of mechanism, the guns were moved into place, each with its caissons at a fixed distance in the rear, and the command, "At ease," was followed by a stable-call, in obedience to which the drivers set to work to feed and groom their horses. For while men may be allowed to go grimed and dirty on campaign, the horses at least must be curried and rubbed and sponged into perfect health and comfort whenever there is opportunity.

Here at the little railway station were assembled all the womankind from a dozen miles round about. These had come to look upon the Army of the Shenandoah, with which Johnston, after several days of skirmishing in the valley with the Federals under Patterson, was hurrying onward

to Manassas to join Beauregard there, in the battle which was so obviously at hand.

The women of every degree had come, not merely to see the spectacle of war, but to cheer the soldiers with smiles and words of encouragement, and still more to minister in what ways they could to their needs. The maids and matrons thus assembled were gaily clad, for war had not yet robbed them of the wherewithal to deck themselves as gaily as the lilies do. They were full of high confidence and ardent hope, for war had not yet brought to them, and for many moons to come was not destined to bring to them, the realisation that defeat and disaster are sometimes a part of the bravest soldiers' fortune. These women believed absolutely and unquestioningly in the righteousness of the Southern cause, and they had not yet read the history of Poland, and La Vendée, and the Huguenots with discretion enough to doubt that victory always in the end crowns the struggles of those who stand for the right.

How much of disappointment and suffering this curiously perverse reading of history has wrought, to be sure! And how confidently, in

every case, the men and women on either side of a war commend their cause to Heaven, in full confidence that God, in his justice, cannot fail to give victory to the right, and cannot fail to understand that they are right and their enemies hopelessly wrong. Probably every educated woman among those who were assembled at the little village on that twentieth day of July, 1861, had read Motley's histories; every one of them knew the story of Poland and of Ireland and of La Vendée and the Camisards; but they still believed that God and not the guns decides the outcome of battles.

In one article of their faith at least they were absolutely right. They believed in the courage, the devotion, the unflinching prowess of the men who had enlisted to fight for their cause. They had come now, at the approach of a first great battle, to bid these men Godspeed. Four years later, when war had well-nigh worn out the gallant Army of Northern Virginia, and when the very hope of ultimate victory, over enormously superior numbers and against incalculably superior resources, was scarcely more than an impulse of faith-inspired insanity, these women of the South

were still present and helpful wherever their presence could cheer, and wherever their help was needed.

To-day, they looked to the morrow for a victory that should make an end of the war. The victory came with a startling completeness wholly unmatched in all the history of battles. But the end did not come, and the war wore itself out, through four long years of brilliant achievement, alternated with terrible disaster. At Petersburg these women did not look to the morrow at all, but their courage was the same, their cheer the same, their devotion the same. It was still their chosen task to encourage the little remnant of an army which still held the defensive works with a line stretched out to attenuation. To the very end — and even after the end — these brave women faltered not nor failed.

When the war began, the women of the South made a gala-day of every day when soldiers were in sight. As the war neared its calamitous end, all days were to them days of mourning and of always willing self-sacrifice.

On that twentieth day of July, 1861, the women gathered together were full of high hope and

confidence. Some were perched upon goods boxes, arranged to serve as seats. Some were tripping about on foot, gliding hither and thither in gladness, as girls do in a dance, simply because their nerves were tuned to a high pitch, and their sympathetic feet refused to be still. But for the most part they sat in their carriages, with the tops thrown back in defiance of the fervour of the sun. Defiance was in the air, indeed, and the troops on their way to the battlefield were not more resolute in their determination to do and to dare, than were the dames and damsels there gathered together in their purpose to disregard sunshine and circumstance, while bestowing their smiles upon these men, their heroes.

After the fashion of the time among volunteers who were presently to become war-worn into veterans, but who were never to be reduced to the condition of hireling regulars, the men were free, as soon as a halt was called, to move about among the feminine throng, greeting their acquaintances when they had any, and being cheerily greeted by strangers, in utter disregard of those conventions with which womanhood elsewhere

than in Virginia surrounds itself. There womanhood had always felt itself free, because it had always felt itself under the protection of all there was of manhood in the land. No woman in that time and country was ever in danger of affront, for the reason that no man dared affront her, lest he encounter vengeance, swift, sure, and relentless, at the hands of the first other man who might hear of the circumstance. No Virginian girl of that time had her mind directed to evil things by the suggestion of chaperonage; and no Virginia gentleman was subjected to insulting imputation by the refusal of a woman's guardians to entrust her protection against himself, as against all others, to his chivalry. So far was the point of honour pressed in such matters, that no man was free even to make the most deferential proposal of marriage to any woman while she was actually or technically under his charge and protection. To do that, it was held, was to place the woman in an embarrassing position, to subject her to the necessity of accepting the offer on the one hand, or of declining it while yet under obligation to accept escort and protection at the hands of the man making it.

Under this rigid code of social intercourse, which granted perfect freedom to all women, and exacted scrupulous respect for such freedom at the hands of all men, the intercourse between gentlemen volunteers and the young women who had come to visit them in camp was even less restrained than that of a drawing-room, in which all are guests of a common host, and all are guaranteed, as it were, by that host's sponsorship of invitation.

In all their dealings with the volunteers, the women of Virginia brought common sense to bear in a positively astonishing degree, reinforcing it with abounding good-will and perfect confidence in the manhood of men as their sufficient shield against misinterpretation. And they were entirely right in this. For "battle, murder, and sudden death," would very certainly have been the part of any man in those ranks who should have failed in due respect to this generosity of mind on the part of womanhood. The dignity of womanhood was never so safe as when women thus confidently left its guardianship to the instinctive chivalry of men.

For a time after the halt, Baillie Pegram was

too busy to inquire whether or not any friends of his own were among the throng. For something had happened to Baillie Pegram over there in the Valley of the Shenandoah two or three days before. The gun to whose detachment he belonged as a cannonier had been detached and sent to an exposed position on the Martinsburg road. The sergeant in command of it had been killed by a bullet, and the two corporals — the gunner and the chief of caisson — had been carried to the rear on litters, with bullets in their bodies. There was absolutely nobody in command of the gun, but Baillie Pegram was serving as number one at the piece — that is to say, as the cannonier handling the sponge and rammer. Seeing the badly weakened gun-crew disposed to falter for lack of anybody to command them, and seeing, too, the necessity of continuing the fire, Baillie assumed an authority which did not belong to him in any way.

"Stand to the gun, men!" he cried. "If any man flunks till this job is done, I'll brain him with my rammer-head, orders or no orders."

A moment later the faltering of number three called upon him for the execution of his threat,

"'If any man flunks — I'll brain him'"

and he instantly did what he had said he would do, felling the man to the grass, stunned for the time by a quick blow with the iron-bound rammer-head. Then he called upon number five to take the recreant's place, and that gun continued its work until the hot little action was over.

A slouchy-looking personage had been standing by all the while. At the end of it all he demanded Baillie Pegram's name and rank, and the name of his battery. That evening Baillie Pegram's captain sent for him, and said:

"I am going to make you my sergeant-major. I have General Jackson's request to recognise your good conduct under his eye to-day. Even without his suggestion I should wish to have you with me as my staff sergeant. I have kept that post open until now, in order that I might choose the best man for it."

It should be explained that the rank of sergeant-major is the very highest non-commissioned rank known to military life. Ordinarily, the sergeant-major is a regimental non-commissioned officer. But following the French system, the Confederate regulations allowed every battery of field-artillery a sergeant-major, if its captain so

desired. He outranked all other non-commissioned officers, and usually exercised a lieutenant's command in battle — always if any commissioned officer were absent or disabled..

Thus it came about that Sergeant-Major Baillie Pegram was too busy on that morning to look up acquaintances among the spectators gathered there. He had orders to execute, and details of many kinds to look after, including the making out of that morning report which every company in the service must daily render, and upon which the commanding general must rely for information as to the exact number of fighting men he has available for duty.

Baillie had just completed this task, when some one brought him news that a lady in a carriage near by wished to speak with him. Having nothing now to do, he responded to the call, and found Agatha Ronald awaiting him. She sat in her carriage alone. In her lap was a work-basket, fully equipped for that mending which these women always came prepared to do when soldiers were passing by. Baillie had no mending to be done, but Agatha bade him remove his jacket and deliver it into her charge.

"We've heard what happened in the Valley the other day," she said, "and it is not seemly for a sergeant-major to be on duty without the insignia of his rank. Red is the artillery colour, I believe, and your marks are three chevrons, with three arches connecting them, are they not? Fortunately, I brought a roll of red braid. So let me have your coat, please, and I'll readjust your costume to your rank."

Agatha spoke glibly, but it was under manifest constraint. She forced and feigned a lightness of mood which she did not feel, and her manner deceived Baillie Pegram completely, as it was meant to do.

"What a fool I am," he thought, "to expect anything else. She was embarrassed when I last saw her, and worried, but that was all on account of her aunts. She is her own mistress to-day, and — well, it is better so. There'll be a fight to-morrow, and that's fortunate."

At that point the girl interrupted his meditations by saying, in her assumed tone of lightness, which he so greatly misinterpreted:

"I know there is war between your house and mine, but I'm going to give aid and comfort to

the enemy, if it comforts you to have your chevrons properly sewed on."

"There can surely be no war between me and thee," he answered, with earnestness in his tone. "At any rate, I do not make war upon a woman, and least of all —"

"You must not misunderstand, Mr. Pegram," the girl broke in, looking at him earnestly out of her great brown eyes. "I esteem you highly, and I am sorry there is trouble between your house and mine. But I am not disloyal to the memory of my father. You must never think that. It is only that you are a gentleman who has been kind to me, and a soldier whom I honour. But the war endures between your house and mine."

Had she slapped him in the face with her open palm, she could not have hurt his pride more deeply. He snatched his jacket from her hand. Only one sleeve was finished, and the needle still hung from it by a thread.

"I'll wear it so," he said. "I, at any rate, have no house. I am the last of my race, and let me say to you now — for I shall never see

you again of my own free will — that the war between our houses will completely end when I receive my discharge from life."

Then a new thought struck him.

"It is not for Baillie Pegram, the master of Warlock, that you have done this," touching the braided sleeve, "but for Baillie Pegram, the soldier on his way to battle. Let it be so."

Stung by his own words, and controlled by an impulse akin to that which had seized him at the gun two days before, he reached out and plucked from her headgear the red feather that she wore there, saying:

"Here! fasten that in my hat. I've a mind to wear it in battle to-morrow. Then I'll send it back to you."

What demon of the perverse had prompted him to this action, he did not know, but the girl in her turn seemed subject to its will. Instead of resenting what he had done, she took the feather and with some quickly plied stitches fastened it securely to his already soiled and worn slouch hat. Then handing it back to him, she said:

"Good-bye. God grant that when the feather

comes back to me, it be not stained to a deeper red than now."

At that moment the bugle blew. Baillie touched his hat, bowed low, and said:

"At least you are a courteous enemy."

"And a generous one?" she asked.

But he did not answer the implied question.

When he had gone, Agatha bent low over her work-basket, as if in search of something that she could not find. If two little tear-drops slipped from between her eyelids, nobody caught sight of them.

Presently another bugle blew, and as Baillie Pegram's battery took up the march, the guns and men of Captain Skinner took its place. But this time there was no mingling of the men with the spectators. Captain Skinner was too rigid a disciplinarian to permit that, and he knew his ruffians too well. The moment the battery halted, the sergeant of the guard posted his sentries, and the men remained within the battery lines.

Seeing this, Agatha tripped from her carriage, and, work-basket in hand, started to enter the battery. She was instantly halted by a sentry, whose

appearance did not tempt her to dispute his authority. She therefore simply said to him, "Call your sergeant of the guard, please." To the sergeant, when he came, she said, "Will you please report to Captain Skinner that Miss Agatha Ronald, of Willoughby, asks leave to enter the battery lines, in order to do such mending for the men as may be needed?"

But it was not necessary for the sergeant to deliver his message, for Captain Skinner, wayworn and dusty, at that moment presented himself, and greeted the visitor.

"It is very gracious of you," he said, "but, my dear young lady, my men do not belong to that class with which alone you are acquainted. You had better not visit my camp."

"Your men are soldiers, sir," she said, "and their needs may be quite as great as those of any others. We are not living in drawing-rooms just now. I crave your permission to enter the battery."

The captain touched his hat again, signed to the sentry to let the young woman pass, and then, turning to the sergeant of the guard, said:

"Post ten extra sentinels among the guns, with orders to arrest instantly any man who utters an oath or in any other way offends this young lady's ears. See to it yourself that this order is obeyed to the letter."

IX

The birth of womanhood

THE captain's stern commands were not needed, and the extra sentinels had no work to do in restraining the men from offensive speech and conduct. They courteously saluted as Agatha passed them by, and when they learned what her kindly mission was, they hurriedly brought armfuls of saddle-blankets and arranged them as a cushion for her on the top of a limber-chest. Perched up there, she called for their torn garments, and nimbly plied her needle and her scissors for the space of half an hour before observing the sentry who had been posted nearest to her. His slouch hat, indeed, was drawn down over his eyes in such fashion that but little of his face could be seen. But looking up at last in search of further work to do, she recognised the form of Marshall Pollard. Instantly a deep flush overspread her face, and, dismounting from the

limber-chest, she approached and addressed him. He presented arms and said to her in French, so that those about them might not understand:

"Pardon me, mademoiselle, but it is forbidden to speak to a sentinel on duty." With that he recovered arms and resumed the monotonous pacing of his beat.

As the girl hurried out of the battery, flushed and agitated, she again encountered Captain Skinner.

"Has anybody been rude to you, Miss Ronald?" he asked, quickly.

"No, Captain Skinner, I have only praise for your men. They have been courteous in the extreme. I predict that they will acquit themselves right gallantly in to-morrow's battle."

"O, they're fighters, and will give a good account of themselves if this muddled railroad management lets us get to Manassas before the fighting is over."

With thanks to Agatha for her kindness, Captain Skinner bowed low in farewell.

Springing into her carriage she gave the command, "Home," and drove away without waiting to see the remainder of the Army of the Shenan-

doah as it moved, partly by train, and partly on march, toward the scene of the coming battle.

During the homeward ride the girl laughed and chatted with her companions with more than her usual vivacity, quite as if this had been the gladdest of all her gala-days. But the gaiety was forced, and the laughter had a nervous note in it which would have betrayed its impulse to her companions had they been of closely observant habit of mind.

But when she reached home Agatha excused herself to her friends, and shut herself in her room. Throwing off her hat, but making no other change in her costume, she stretched herself upon the polished floor, after a habit she had indulged since childhood whenever her spirit was perturbed. For an hour she lay there upon the hard ash boards, with her hands clasped under her head, thinking, thinking, thinking.

"God knows," she thought, "I have tried to do my duty, and it is bitterly hard for a woman. In loyalty to my dead father's memory, I have insulted and wounded the only man I could ever have loved, and sent him away from me in anger and wretchedness. And even in doing that —

even in being cruel to him and to myself, I have fallen short of my duty as Agatha Ronald. I have weakly yielded something at least of that proud attitude which it is my duty to my family traditions to maintain. I have recognised the state of war, but I have parleyed with the enemy. And Baillie Pegram is at this hour wearing a plume plucked from my hat and fastened into his by my own hands. God forgive me if I have been disloyal! But is it disloyalty?"

With that question echoing in her mind she sat up, staring at the wall, as if trying there to read her answer.

"Is it my duty to cherish a feud that is meaningless to me — to hate a man who has done no wrong to me or mine, simply because there was a quarrel between our ancestors before either of us was born? I do not know! I do not know! But I must be true to my family, true to my race, true to the traditions in which I have been bred. I have fallen short of that in this case. I must not err again. I must never again forget, even for a moment, that Baillie Pegram is my hereditary enemy."

Then she caught herself thinking and almost

wishing that a Federal bullet might end her perplexity — that Baillie Pegram might never live to see her again. "I wonder," she thought, "if that is what Christ meant when he said that one who hates his neighbour is a murderer in his heart. It is all a blind riddle to me. Here have I been brought up a Christian, taught from my infancy that hatred is murder, and taught at the same time that it is my highest duty, as a Ronald, to go on hating all the Pegrams on earth because my father and Baillie Pegram's grandfather quarrelled over something that I know absolutely nothing about!"

Presently the girl's mind reverted to the second meeting of that eventful day, — her encounter with Marshall Pollard. She wondered why he had enlisted in company with such men as those who constituted Captain Skinner's battery, for even thus early those men had become known as the worst gang of desperadoes imaginable, — a band that must be kept day and night under a discipline as rigid and as watchful as that of any State prison, lest they lapse into crimes of violence. She wondered if this meant that the peculiarly gentle-souled Marshall Pollard was trying

to "throw himself away," as she had heard that men disappointed in love sometimes do, — that he wished to degrade himself by low associations.

"And I am the cause of it all," she mourned. For she knew that Marshall Pollard had loved her with the love of an honest man, and that his life had been darkened, to say the least, by her inability to respond to his devotion. In this case she should have had the consolation of knowing that she had been guilty of no wilful, no conscious wrong, but, in her present mood, she was disposed to flagellate her soul for an imagined offence.

"He came to me," she reflected, "loving me from the first. Little idiot that I was, I did not understand. I liked him as a girl may like a boy, — for I was only a girl then, — and I did not dream that the affection he manifested toward me meant more than that sort of thing on his part. Those things which ought to have revealed to me his state of mind meant nothing more to me then than do the little gallantries and deferences which all men pay to all women. How bitterly he reproached me at the last for having deceived him and led him on with encouragements which I at least had not intended as such. Are all women

born coquettes? Is it our cruel instinct to trifle with the souls of men, as little children love to torture their pets? Have we women no principles, no earnestness, no consciences — except afterward, when remorse awakens us? Are we blind, that we do not see, and deaf that we do not hear? Or is it our nature to be cruel, especially to those who love us and offer us the best that there is in their strong natures?

"I remember how we stood out there in the grounds, under the jessamine arbour, as the sun went down; and how at last, when I had made him understand, he plucked a sprig of the beautiful, golden flowers from the bunch that I held in my hand, and how I bade him beware, for that the jessamine is poisonous, and how he replied, 'Not more poisonous than it is to love a coquette.'

"I remember that he gave me no chance to answer, no opportunity to protest again my innocence of such intent as he had imputed to me in his passionate speech, but turned his back and stalked away, with that stride which I saw again to-day, as he paced his beat. That was two years ago — and to-day I have seen him again in such company as he would never have sought but for

me, — the willing companion of ruffians, the associate of desperadoes, the messmate of thieves!"

Agatha was on her feet now, and nervously laying aside one after another of the little fripperies with which she had decorated her person that day. She found herself presently half-unconsciously searching for the gown that she must wear at dinner, though her never-failing maid had laid it out long before her home-coming, that it might be in readiness for her need.

A sudden thought came into the suffering girl's mind.

"These two men, whose lives are hurt by their love for me, will suffer far less than I shall. They are soldiers as strong to endure as they are strong to dare. They have occupation for all their waking hours. They will be upon the march, in battle, or otherwise actively employed all the time. In remembering more strenuous things they will forget their sorrows and throw aside their griefs as they cast away everything when they go into battle that may in any wise hinder their activity or embarrass their freedom. I must sit still here at Willoughby, and think, and think, and think."

Then like a lightning flash another thought came into her mind, and she spoke it aloud:

"Why should I be idler than they are? Why should I sit here brooding while they are toiling and fighting for Virginia? I am no more afraid of death or of danger than they are, and while women may not fight, there are other ways in which a woman of courage may render quite as good a service. I'll do it. I'll take the risks. I'll endure the hardships. I'll render my country a *service that shall count.*"

With that she rang for her maid and bade her prepare a cold plunge bath. When she descended to dinner, an hour later, Agatha no longer chattered frivolously, as she had done in the carriage, by way of concealing her emotions, but bore herself seriously, as became her in view of the prospect of battle on the morrow.

In that hour of agonising thought, Agatha Ronald had ceased to be a girl, and had become an earnest, resolute woman, strong to do, strong to endure, and, if need be, strong to dare. Life had taken on a new meaning in her eyes.

X

In action

IT was midnight when the battery to which Baillie was attached reached Manassas Junction. The men were weary and half-starved after three days of fighting and marching, and the horses, worn out with dragging the guns and caissons over well-nigh impassable roads, were famishing for water. But an effort to secure water and forage for them failed, and so did an effort to secure water and rations for the men.

For on the eve of the first great battle of the war the Southern army was in a state of semi-starvation which grew worse with every hour that brought fresh relays of troops but no new supplies of food. Already had begun that course of extraordinary mismanagement in the supply departments at Richmond which throughout the war kept the Army of Northern Virginia

constantly half-starving or wholly starving, even when, as at Manassas, it lay in the midst of a land of abounding plenty.

All the efforts of the generals commanding in the field to remedy this state of things by drawing upon the granaries and smoke-houses round about them for supplies that were in danger of presently falling into the enemy's hands, were thwarted by the stupid obstinacy of a crack-brained commissary-general. It was his inexplicable policy, while the army lay at Manassas with an unused railroad reaching into the rich fields to the west, to forbid the purchase of food and forage there except by his own direct agents, who were required to send it all to Richmond, whence it was transported back again, in such meagre quantities as an already overtaxed single track railroad could manage to carry.

Red-tape was choking the army to death from the very beginning, and it continued to do so to the end, in spite of all remonstrances.

Even in the matter of water the men at Manassas were restricted to a few pints a day to each man for all uses, simply because the commanding

general was not allowed the simple means of procuring a more adequate supply.

This, however, is not the place in which to set forth in detail those facts of perverse stupidity which have been fully stated in official reports, in General Beauregard's memoirs, and in other authoritative works. Such matters are mentioned herein only so far as they affected the events that go to make up the present story.

When the Army of the Shenandoah began to add its numbers to that already gathered at Manassas, a way out was found, so far at least as water was concerned, by sending the regiments and batteries, as fast as they came, to positions near Bull Run, some miles in front, where water at least was to be had. Baillie's command, worn out as it was, and suffering from hunger, was hurried through the camp and forced to march some weary miles farther before taking even that small measure of rest and sleep that the rapidly waning night allowed. It was nearly morning when the men and horses were permitted to drink together out of the muddy stream which was presently to mark the fighting-line between two armies in fierce battle for the mastery.

It was nearly sunrise when a cannon-shot broke the stillness of a peculiarly brilliant Sunday morning and summoned all the weary men to their posts. A little later the battery with which we are concerned received its orders and was moved into position on the line. Its complement of commissioned officers being short, Sergeant-Major Baillie Pegram had command of the two guns which constituted the left section, and had a lieutenant's work to do.

Troops were being hurried hither and thither in what seemed to Baillie's inexperienced eyes a hopeless confusion. But as he watched, he saw order grow out of the chaos, — a manifestation of the fact that there was one mind in control, and that every movement, however meaningless it might seem, was part and parcel of a concerted plan, and was intended to have its bearing upon the result.

In the meanwhile the occasional report of a rifle had grown into a continuous rattle of musketry on the farther side of the stream, where the skirmishers were hotly at work, their firing being punctuated now and then by the deeper exclamation of a cannon. But the work of the day had

not yet begun in earnest. The main line was not yet engaged, and would not be until the skirmishers should slowly fall back upon it from their position beyond the stream.

To men in line of battle this is the most trying of all war's experiences. Then it is that every man questions himself closely as to his ability to endure the strain. Nerves are stretched to a tension that threatens collapse. Speech is difficult even to the bravest men, and the longing to plunge into the fray and be actively engaged is well-nigh irresistible.

All this and worse is the experience even of war-seasoned veterans when they must stand or lie still during these endless minutes of waiting, while the skirmishers are engaged in front. What must have been the strain upon the nerves and brains of men, not one of whom had as yet seen a battle, and not one in ten of whom had even received his "baptism of fire" in a skirmish, as the men in Baillie's battery had done during the week before! It is at such a time, and not in the heat of battle, that men's courage is apt to falter, and that discipline alone holds them to their duty.

The strain was rather relieved of its intensity

by the shrieking of a Hotchkiss shell, which presently burst in the midst of Baillie Pegram's section and not far from his person. Then came the less noisy but more nerve-racking patter of musket-balls, — few and scattering still, as the skirmish-lines were still well in front,—but deadly in their force, as was seen when two or three of the men suddenly sank to the ground in the midst of a stillness which was broken only by the whiz of the occasional bullets.

One man cried out with pain. The rest of those struck were still. The one who cried out was slightly wounded. The others were dead. And the battle was not yet begun.

At this moment came a courier with orders. Upon receiving them the captain hurriedly turned to Baillie, and said:

"Take your section across the Run, at the ford there just to the left. Take position with the skirmish-line and get your orders from its commander. Leave your caissons behind, and move at a gallop."

Baillie Pegram was too new to the business of war to understand precisely what all this meant. Had he seen a little more of war he

would have guessed at once that the enemy was moving upon the Confederate left along the road that lay beyond the stream, and that his guns were needed to aid the skirmishers in the work to be done in front in preparation for the battle that had not yet burst in all its fury. He would have understood, too, from the order to leave his caissons behind, that the stand beyond the stream was not meant to be of long duration. The fifty shots he carried in each of his limber-chests would be quite enough to last him till orders should come to fall back across the stream again.

But he did not understand all this clearly. What he did understand was that he was under orders to take his guns across the stream and use them there as vigorously as he could till further orders should come.

As he emerged from the woods a few hundred yards beyond Bull Run, he found a skirmish-line of men lying down and contesting the ground inch by inch with another line like their own, beyond which he could see the heavy columns of the enemy marching steadily to turn the Confederate left flank and force it from its position.

Notwithstanding his lack of experience in such matters, he saw instantly what was happening, and realised that this left wing of Beauregard's army was destined to receive the brunt of the enemy's attack. He wondered, in his ignorance, if Beauregard knew all this, and if somebody ought not to go and tell him of it.

He had no time to think beyond this, for at that moment the skirmish-line, under some order which he had not heard, gave way to the right and left, leaving a little space open for his guns. Planting them there he opened fire with shrapnel, which he now and then changed to canister when the enemy, in his eagerness, pressed forward to within scant distance of the slowly retiring skirmish-line of the Confederates.

Under orders Baillie fell back with the skirmishers, moving the guns by hand, and continuing to fire as he went.

As the Confederate skirmishers drew near the stream which they were to cross, the officer in command of them said to Pegram:

"Advance your guns a trifle, Sergeant-Major, and give them your heaviest fire for twenty-five seconds or so. When they recoil, limber up and

take your guns across the creek as quickly as possible. I'll cover your movement."

Baillie did not perfectly understand the purpose of this, but he understood his orders, and very promptly obeyed them. Advancing his guns quickly to a little knoll thirty or forty yards in front, he opened fire with double charges of canister, each gun firing at the rate of three or four times a minute, and each vomiting a gallon of iron balls at each discharge into the faces of a line of men not a hundred yards away. At the same moment the riflemen of the skirmish-line rose to their feet, rushed forward with a yell that impressed Baillie as truly demoniacal, and delivered a murderous volley of Minie balls in aid of his canister. The combined fire was irresistible, as it was meant to be, and the Federal skirmishers fell back in some confusion in face of it.

Then the cool-headed leader of the skirmishers turned to Baillie and commanded:

"Now be quick. Take your guns across the creek at once. They'll be on us again in a minute with reinforcements, but I'll hold them back till you get the guns across —"

He had not finished his order when he fell, with a bullet in his brain, and his men, picking him up, laid him limply across his horse, which two of them hurried to the rear, passing within ten feet of Baillie Pegram as he struggled to get his guns across the run without wetting his ammunition.

"Poor, gallant fellow!" thought Baillie, as the corpse was borne past him. "He was only a captain, but he would have made himself a major-general presently, with his coolness and his determination. He died too soon!"

Meanwhile Baillie was busy executing the order that the dead man had given with his last breath, while some other was in command out there in front and struggling to protect the guns till they could pass the stream.

It is always so in life. No man is indispensable. When one man falls at the post of duty, there is always some other to take his place. "Men may come and men may go," but the work that men were born to do "goes on for ever."

As Baillie was directing the struggles of his drivers in the difficult task of recrossing the stream, three shells burst over him in so quick a

succession that he did not know from which of them came the fragment that cut a great gash in his head and rendered him for the moment senseless. He recovered himself quickly, and this was fortunate, for his untrained and inexperienced men were far less steady in retreat under fire than they had been out there in front, and Baillie's direction was needed now to prevent them from abandoning in panic the guns with which they had fought so gallantly a few minutes before.

Under his sharply given commands they recovered their morale, and a few minutes later Baillie brought his powder-grimed guns again into position on the left of the battery. Then, half-blinded by the blood that was flowing freely over his face and clothing, he sought his captain, raised his hand in salute, and said, feebly:

"Captain, I beg to report that I have executed my orders. My men have behaved well, every —"

A heavy musketry fire from the enemy at that moment began, and Baillie Pegram's horse — the beautiful sorrel mare on which Agatha had once ridden — sank under him, in that strange,

limp way in which a horse falls when killed instantly by a bullet received in any vital part.

By good fortune the sergeant-major was not caught under the animal, but as he tried to walk toward the new mount which he had asked for, he staggered and fell, much as the mare had done, but from a different cause. Complete unconsciousness had overtaken him, as a consequence of the shock of his wound and the resultant loss of blood.

When he came to consciousness again, he was lying on the grass under a tree, with a young surgeon kneeling beside him, busy with bandages. For a time his consciousness did not extend beyond his immediate surroundings and the terrific aching of his head. Presently the heavy firing which seemed to be all about him, and the zip, zip, zip of bullets as they struck the earth under the hospital tree brought him to a realisation of the fact that battle was raging there, and that he, somehow, — he could not make out how, — was absent from his post with the guns. He made a sudden effort to rise, but instantly fell back again, unconscious.

When he next came to himself there was a

sound as of thousands of yelling demons in his ears, which he presently made out to be the " rebel yell " issuing from multitudinous throats. There were hoof-beats all about him, too, the hoof-beats of a thousand horses moving at full speed. Excited by these sounds, wondering and anxiously apprehensive, he made another effort to rise, but was promptly restrained by the strong but gentle hands of an attendant, who said to him, with more of good sense than grammar:

" Lay still. It's all right, and it's all over. We've licked 'em, and they's a-runnin' like mad. The horsemen what passed us was Stuart's cavalry, a-goin' after 'em to see that they don't stop too soon."

Stuart was drunk with delight. He shouted to his men, as he rode across Stone Bridge: " Come on, boys! We'll gallop over the long bridge into Washington to-night if some blockhead doesn't stop us with orders, and I reckon we can gallop away from orders! "

Baillie lay still only because the attendant kept a hand upon his chest and so restrained him. As he listened, the firing receded and grew less in volume, except that now and then it burst out in

a volley. That was when one of Stuart's squadrons came suddenly upon a mass of their confused and fleeing foes and poured a hail-storm of leaden cones in among them as a suggestion that it was time for them to scatter and resume their run for Washington.

As the turmoil grew less and faded into the distance, Baillie's wits slowly came back to him, and thoughts of himself returned.

"Where am I?" was his first question.

"Under a hospital tree on the battle-field of Manassas," answered the nurse. "You're about two hundred yards in the rear of the position where your battery has been covering itself with glory all day. It's gone now to help in the pursuit. But it's had it hot and heavy all day, judging from the sloppings over."

"The 'sloppings over?' What do you mean?"

"Why, the bullets and shells and things that didn't get theirselves stopped, like, on the lines, but come botherin' over here by this hospital tree. Two of 'em hit wounded men, an' finally, just at the last, you know, the doctor got his come-uppance."

"Was he wounded?"

"Wuss 'n that. He war killed, jes' like a ordinary soldier. That's why you're still a-layin' here, an' here you'll lay, I reckon, all night, for they ain't nobody left to give no orders, 'ceptin' me, an' I ain't nothin' but a detail. But I'm a-goin' to git you somethin' to eat ef I kin. They's another hospital jest over the hill, an' mebbe they've got somethin' to eat, an' mebbe they's a spare surgeon there, too. Anyhow I'm a-goin' to do the best I kin fer you an' the rest."

"How many of us are there?" asked Baillie.

"Only four now — not enough for them to bother about, I s'pose they'll say, specially sence two on 'em is clean bound to die, anyhow. All the slightly wounded has been carried away to a reg'lar hospital. That's their game, I reckon — to take good keer o' the fellers that's a-goin' to git well, so as to make complaints ef they don't, an' leave the rest what can't live to make no complaints to die where they is."

Baillie was too weak, and still too muddled in his intelligence, to disabuse the mountaineer's mind of this misconception. It is only ordinary justice to say that his interpretation was utterly wrong. There was never a more heroic set of

men than the surgeons who ministered on the battle-fields of the Civil War to the wounded on one side or on the other. At the beginning, their department was utterly unorganised, and scarcely at all equipped, either with material appliances or with capable human help in the way of nurses, litter-bearers, or ambulance-men. They did the best they could. When battle was on, they hung yellow flags from trees as near the firing-line as possible, and these flags were respected by both sides, so far as intentional firing upon them was concerned. But located as they were, just in the rear of the fighters, these field-hospitals were constantly under a heavy fire, aimed not at them, but at the fighting-line in front, and it was under such a fire that the young surgeons did their difficult and very delicate work. The tying of an artery was often interfered with by the bursting of a shell which half-buried both patient and surgeon in loose earth. It was the duty of these field-surgeons to do only so much as might be immediately necessary—to put their patients as quickly as possible into a condition in which it was reasonably safe to send them, in ambulances or upon litters, to some better-equipped hospital in the

rear. Very naturally and very properly, the surgeons discriminated, in selecting wounded men to send to the hospitals, between those who were in condition to be removed, and those to whom removal would mean death, certainly or probably. The mountaineer, who had been detailed as a hospital attendant that day, did not understand, and so he misinterpreted.

"Where is my hat?" Baillie Pegram asked, after a period of silence.

"Is it the one with a red feather in it?" responded the attendant.

"Yes."

"Well, it's a good deal the wuss for wear," answered the man, producing the blood-soaked and soil-stained headgear. "I don't think you'll want to wear it again."

But when the headpiece was brought, the young man, with feeble and uncertain fingers, detached the feather and thrust it inside his flannel shirt, leaving the lacerated hat where it had fallen upon the ground.

"Am I badly wounded?" Pegram asked, after a little.

"Well," answered the man, "you've got a

good deal more'n I should like to be a-carryin' around with me. But I reckon you'll pull through, perticular ef you kin git to a hospital after a bit."

Just then, as night was falling, a pitiless rain began, and all night long Baillie Pegram lay in a furrow of the field, soaked and suffering. But he removed the feather from its hiding-place, and held it upon his chest, in order that the rain might wash away the blood-stains with which it had been saturated.

When the morning came, and the ambulance with it, the blood-stains were gone and the feather was clean, though its texture was limp, its appearance bedraggled, and much of its original colour had been washed out.

Two or three days later, Agatha Ronald at her home received by mail a package containing a feather, once red but now badly faded. No note or message of any kind accompanied it, but Agatha understood. She had already learned through the newspapers that "Sergeant-Major Baillie Pegram, after a desperate encounter with the enemy on the outer lines, had been severely —

perhaps mortally — wounded in the head;" and that "Sergeant-Major Baillie Pegram has been mentioned in General Orders for his gallant conduct on the field, with a recommendation for promotion, if he recovers from his wounds, as the surgeons give little hope that he will."

She wrapped the faded feather in tissue-paper, deposited it in a jewelled glove-box which had come to her as an heirloom from her mother, and put it away in one of her most sacred depositories.

A week or two later, she learned that Sergeant-Major Baillie Pegram had been removed from the general hospital at Richmond to his home at Warlock, and that he was now expected to recover from his wounds.

XI

At warlock

"IT'S jes' what I done tole you niggas fust off."

That was Sam's comment upon the situation when his master was brought home to Warlock, stretched upon a litter.

"I done tole yer what'd happen when Mas' Baillie go off to de wah in dat way, 'thout Sam to take k'yar of him. An' bar in min' what else I done tole yer, too. Ain't de chinch-bug done et up de wheat, jes' as I tole yer? Now, Mas' Baillie, he's a-gwine to die wid that hole in he haid. Den what's a-gwine to become o' you niggas?"

Sam promptly installed himself as his master's nurse, sitting by him during the day, and sleeping on the floor by his bedside every night. For a time it seemed likely that the negro's dismal prophecy of Baillie's death would be fulfilled, but

with rest and the bracing air of his own home, he slowly grew better, until he was able at last to sun himself in the porch or under the trees of the lawn.

He chafed a good deal at first over the fact that he had not seen the major part of the fighting along Bull Run, and it annoyed him still more that he was likely to lose his share in a campaign which was expected to bring the war to a speedy and glorious end. It was Marshall Pollard who laughed him out of this latter regret. During the long waiting-time that followed the battle of Manassas, Marshall, who had gained a lieutenancy in his battery, secured several brief leaves of absence in order to visit the convalescent man at Warlock.

"You're missing nothing whatever, Baillie," he said to him one day, in answer to his querulous complainings. "We're doing nothing out there in front of Washington, and, so far as I can see, we're not likely to do anything for many months to come. When the battle of Manassas ended in such a rout of the enemy as never will happen again, we all expected to push on into Washington, where only a very feeble resistance or none

at all would have been met. When that didn't happen, we confidently expected that the army at Centreville would be reinforced at once with every man who could be hurried to the front, and that General Johnston would push across the Potomac and take Washington in the rear, or capture Baltimore and Philadelphia, and cut Washington off.

"I don't pretend to understand grand strategy, but this was plain common sense, and I suppose that common sense has its part to play in grand strategy, as in everything else. Anyhow, it is certain that that was the time to strike, and if the army at Manassas had been reinforced and pushed across the Potomac while the enemy was so hopelessly demoralised and disintegrated, there is not the smallest doubt in my mind that the war would have come to an end within a month or two. Instead of that, we have done nothing, while the enemy has been straining every nerve to bring new troops into the field by scores of thousands, and to drill and discipline them for the serious work of war. They have done all this so effectually that they now have two or three men to our one, half a dozen guns to

our one, and supply departments so perfectly organised that no man in all that host need go without his three good meals a day, while we are kept very nearly in a state of starvation, and are now fortifying at Centreville, like a beaten army, whose chief concern is to defend itself against the danger of capture."

"Have you ever heard an explanation of this strange state of things?" asked Baillie. "You see, I've been out of the way of hearing anything ever since the battle."

"O, yes, I've heard all sorts of explanations. But the real explanation, I think, is the lack of an experienced general, capable of grasping the situation and turning it to account. Neither in the field nor in authority at Richmond, have we a man who ever commanded an army, or even looked on while a great campaign was in progress. General Johnston and General Beauregard are doubtless very capable officers in their way. But until this war came, they were mere captains in the engineer corps, engaged in constructing Mississippi levees, and that sort of thing. Neither of them ever in his life commanded a brigade. Neither ever saw a great

battle, or had anything to do with an army composed of men by scores of thousands.

"Their victory at Manassas simply appalled them. They didn't know at all what to do next. They will probably become good and capable commanders of armies before the war is over, but at present they are only ex-captains of engineers, suddenly thrust into positions for which they have absolutely none of that fitness which comes of experience."

"But have they not learned enough yet? Will they not now see their opportunity, and undertake a fall campaign?"

"No. The opportunity is entirely gone. The Federal army is to-day much stronger in every way than our own. We have pottered away the months that should have been spent in vigorous and decisive action. The only man in our army capable of seeing and seizing such an opportunity and turning it to account — I mean Robert E. Lee — has been kept in the mountains of Western Virginia, engaged in settling wretched little disputes among a lot of incapable, cantankerous political brigadiers. It means a long war and a terrible one, Baillie, and you'll have opportunity

to do all the fighting you want before it is over. But nothing of any consequence will be done this fall."

The young lieutenant was quite right in his prophecy. Except for a little contest at Drainesville — amounting to scarcely more than a skirmish — there was absolutely nothing done until the 21st of October. Then occurred the small, badly ordered and strategically meaningless battle of Leesburg, or Ball's Bluff, when the Federals were again completely defeated. After that came a long autumn of superb campaigning weather, and a tedious winter of complete inaction. Federal expeditions besieged some of the forts and islands along the Carolina coasts, thus preparing the way for a coast campaign which was never made in earnest.

There was fighting of some consequence in Kentucky and Missouri, and as the winter waned, General Grant made his important campaign against the forts on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers, breaking the Confederate line of defence in that quarter, and pushing it southward. But in Virginia, the natural battle-field,

absolutely nothing was done during all those months of weary waiting.

For this strange and strangely prolonged pause in a war which had begun with a rush and a hurrah, history has been puzzled to find an explanation. It is true that the Confederate forces were untrained volunteers, whose endurance and discipline could not have been relied upon in an aggressive campaign to anything like the extent to which Lee afterward depended upon the unflinching endurance and unfaltering courage of these same men. But the Federal army was at that time in much worse condition. To unfamiliarity with war and to complete lack of discipline in that army, there was added the demoralisation of disastrous defeat and panic. General McClellan said in his official capacity, and with carefully chosen words, that when he was placed in control in August, he found "no army to command, — a mere collection of regiments cowering on the banks of the Potomac, some perfectly raw, others dispirited by recent defeat, some going home." He completed his description of the situation by saying: "There were no defensive works on the southern approaches to

the capital. Washington was crowded with straggling officers and men absent from their stations without authority."

Why the Confederates, with their great victory to urge them on, made no effort to take advantage of such conditions, but lay still instead, giving McClellan many months in which to recruit and organise and drill his forces into one of the most formidable armies of modern times, is one of the puzzles of history. Perhaps Marshall Pollard's suggestion was the correct explanation, — namely, that there was no general at Manassas who knew what to do with a great opportunity, or how to do it.

Seeing that Baillie was becoming excited by this serious talk, his friend adroitly turned the conversation to less strenuous matters. Half an hour later The Oaks ladies drove up in their antique, high-hung carriage, to make that formal inquiry concerning Mr. Baillie Pegram's convalescence which from the first they had made with great scrupulousness three times every week.

When they had gone, Pollard asked:

"Have you seen Miss Agatha since that day

last spring, when you were requested not to visit The Oaks?"

For a moment Baillie remained silent. Then he said: "If you don't mind, I'd rather not talk of that, Marshall."

That was all that passed between these two on that subject during the week of Marshall's stay at Warlock. How unlike men are to women in these things! Had these two young men been two young women instead, how minutely each would have confided to the other the last detail of experience and thought and feeling! And this not because women are more emotional than men — for they are not — but because they are not ashamed, as men are, of the tenderer side of their natures.

XII

Under escort

NO sooner had Agatha Ronald determined to enter upon a career of very dangerous service to her cause and country, than she set herself diligently to the work of perfecting plans which were at first vague and undefined. It was no part of her purpose to fail if by any forethought and thoroughness of preparation she might avert the danger of failure. She determined to do nothing until every point and possibility, so far as conditions could be foreseen, should be considered and provided for.

First of all, she entered into perfect confidence with her maid, Martha, telling the trusty negro woman as she meant to tell no other person near her, except her grandfather, precisely what she intended to do, and how. Martha had a shrewd intelligence likely to be useful in emergencies, and her devotion to her mistress was as absolute

as that of any devotee to an object of worship. This mistress had been hers to care for by night and by day ever since Agatha had been four years of age. All of loyalty, all of affection, all of self-sacrificing devotion of which the negro character in its best estate is capable, she gave to Agatha, never doubting her due or questioning her right to such service of the heart and soul. She knew no other love than this, no other life than that of unceasing, all-embracing care for her mistress.

It was with no shadow of doubt or hesitation, therefore, that Agatha revealed her purposes to Martha, and asked for her aid in carrying them out. And Martha received the somewhat startling confidence as calmly as if her mistress had been telling her of an intended afternoon drive.

When matters had settled down into apathetic idleness after the battle of Manassas, Agatha made occasion to visit the army. Officers at Fairfax Court-house had their wives and daughters with them at their headquarters then, and many of these were Agatha's intimates, whom she might visit without formal invitation.

At their quarters, she received visits from such

of her friends as belonged to the cavalry forces stationed thereabouts. In her intercourse with these, she steadily maintained the innocent little fiction that she was there solely for social purposes, and to see the splendid army that had so recently won an astonishing victory.

One day, she learned that the picturesque cavalier, General J. E. B. Stuart, had boldly pushed his outposts to Mason's and Munson's Hills, and established his headquarters under a tree, within easy sight of Washington. She instantly developed an intense desire to visit him there. It happened that she knew Stuart and his family personally, and had often dined in the great cavalry leader's company at her own and other homes. So she said one day, to a young cavalry officer, who was calling upon her:

"I want you to do me a very great service. I want you to ask General Stuart to let me visit him at the outposts. He'll offer to come here to call upon me instead, for he is always gallant, but you are to tell him I will not permit that. The service needs him at the front, and I want to visit him there. Besides, I particularly want

to take a peep at Washington City in its new guise as a foreign capital which we are besieging."

The young man remonstrated. He protested that there was very great danger in the attempt — that raids from the picket-lines were of daily occurrence, that the firing was often severe — and all the rest of it, wherefore General Stuart would almost certainly forbid the young lady's proposed enterprise.

The girl calmly looked the young man in the eyes — he was an old friend whom she had known from her childhood — and said, very solemnly:

"Charlie, I am no more afraid of bullets than you are. My heart is set upon this visit, and you *must* arrange it for me. As for General Stuart, I'll manage him, if you'll carry a note to him for me."

That young man had once begun to make love to Agatha, and she had checked him gently and affectionately in time to spare his pride, and to make of him her willing knight for all time to come. So he answered promptly:

"I'll carry your note, of course, and if Stuart gives permission, I'll beg to be myself your escort.

Then, if anybody bothers you with bullets or anything else, it'll be a good deal the worse for him."

The girl thanked him in a way that would have made a hero of him in her defence had occasion served, and presently she scribbled a little note and placed it in the young cavalryman's hands for delivery. It was simple enough, but it was so worded as to make sure that Stuart would promptly grant its request. It ran as follows:

"My dear General Stuart: — I very much want to see you for half an hour out where you are, at Mason's or Munson's Hill, and not here at Fairfax Court-house. My visit will be absolutely and entirely in the public interest, though to all others than yourself I am pretending that it is prompted solely by the whim of a romantic young girl. Please send a permit at once, and please permit Lieutenant Fauntleroy, who bears this, to be my escort."

The note was unsealed, of course, except by the honour of the gentleman who bore it. Stuart's response was prompt, as every act of his enthu-

siastic life was sure to be. He read the note, held a corner of the sheet in the blaze of his camp-fire, and retained his hold upon the farther corner of it until it was quite consumed. Then he dropped the charred sheets into the coals, and turning to Lieutenant Fauntleroy, commanded:

"Return at once to Fairfax Court-house, detail an escort of half a dozen good men under your own personal command, and escort Miss Ronald to my headquarters. Be very careful not to place the young lady under fire if you can avoid it. Ride in the woods, or under other cover, wherever you can. Remember, you will have a lady in charge, and must take no risks."

"At what time shall I report with Miss Ronald?"

"At her time — at whatever time she shall fix upon as most pleasing to her."

Thus it came about that before noon of the next day, in the midst of a pouring rain-storm, General Stuart lifted Agatha Ronald from her saddle, taking her by the waist for that purpose. He welcomed her with a kiss upon her brow, as the daughter of a house whose hospitality he had often enjoyed. He quickly escorted her to

a little brush shelter which he had made his men hastily construct as a defence for her against the rain, and ordered the sentries posted full fifty yards away, in order that the conversation might by no chance be overheard.

"It is a splendid service," he said, when the girl had finished telling him of her plans. "But it will be attended by extraordinary danger to a young woman like you."

"I have considered all that, General," she replied, very seriously. "I do not shrink from the danger."

"Of course not. You are a woman, a Virginian, and a Ronald, — three sufficient guarantees of courage. But I'm afraid for you. It is a terrible risk you are going to take — immeasurably greater in the case of a woman than in that of a man."

"I have my wits, General, — and this," showing him a tiny revolver. "With that a woman can always defend her honour."

"You mean by suicide?"

"Yes — if necessity compels." Stuart looked at the gentle girl, gazing into her fawn-like brown

eyes as if trying to read her soul in their depths. Presently he said:

"God bless you and keep you, dear! I'm going to ride back to Fairfax Court-house with you. Make yourself as comfortable as you can here for half an hour, while I ride out to the pickets. I'll be with you soon, and then we'll have dinner, for you are my guest to-day."

When the dinner was served, it consisted of some ears of corn, plucked from a neighbouring field, and roasted with husks unremoved, among the live coals of the cavalier's camp-fire. Stuart made no apology for the lack of variety in the meal, for he sincerely accepted the doctrine which he often preached to his men, that "anything edible makes a good enough dinner if you are hungry, and the simpler it is, the better. There's nothing more troublesome in a campaign than cooking utensils and unnecessary things generally. If armies would move without them, there'd be more and better fighting done. The chief thing in war is to start at once and get there without delay."

The meal over, Stuart held out his hand as a step, from which Agatha lightly sprang into

her saddle. Then he mounted the superb gray, which he always rode when battle was on, or when he had a gentlewoman under his charge. For there was a touch of the boyish dandy in Stuart, and a good deal more than a touch of that gallantry which prompts every true man of warm blood to honour womanhood with every possible attention.

The horse was fit for his rider, and that is saying quite all that can be said in praise of a horse. Mounted upon him, Stuart was the bodily presentment of all that painters and sculptors have imagined the typical cavalier to be or to seem. Stalwart of figure, erect in carriage, his muscles showing themselves in graceful strength with every movement of his body, his head carried like that of a boy or a young bull, his beard closely clipped, his moustache standing out straight at the ends, and resembling that of Virginia's earliest knight errant, Captain John Smith, of Jamestown, Stuart was a picture to look upon, which the onlooker did not soon forget. His many-gabled slouch hat was decorated with streaming plumes, that helped to make of him a target for the enemy's sharpest sharpshooters whenever battle

was on. Full of vigour, full of health, and full to the very lips of a boyish enthusiasm of life, he seemed never to know what weariness might signify, and never for one moment to abate the intensity of his purpose. He did all things as if all had been part of a great game in which he was playing for a championship.

On this occasion, however, his manner was subdued, and his conversation serious in a degree unusual to one of his effervescent spirits. He was riding with Agatha Ronald for the very serious purpose of talking with her about details that must be carefully arranged with a view to her safety in the dangerous undertaking upon which she was about to enter. A word or two to Lieutenant Fauntleroy sent that officer with his escort squad to the front, while Stuart and his charge rode in rear.

"Now, one thing more is necessary, Miss Agatha," he said. "You ought to reënter our country far to the west, if you can, where there are no armies, and only small detachments. Still, I don't know so well about that. Here we keep the Yankees too busy at the front to attend to matters in the rear, while over in the valley they'll

have nothing better to do than look out for wandering women like you. Anyhow, you may find it necessary or advisable to enter my lines. In that case, you must be arrested immediately and brought to my headquarters. That is necessary on all accounts — to prevent the nature of your mission from being discovered, and — well, to prevent you from having to report to anybody but me. I shall want to see you, and hear all about your results. So I'm going to give orders every day that will put every picket-officer on watch for you, and impress every one of them with the idea that you are a peculiarly dangerous person, in league with traitors on our side, and trying to put yourself into communication with such. I cannot give you any sort of paper, you see, for papers are always dangerous. But I'll give you six words that will answer the purpose. Whenever you speak the right one of these words with emphasis, the picket-officer will understand that you are the very dangerous spy whose entrance into our lines I anticipate, and whose arrest I particularly desire to secure. I'll give out one of the six words each day, particularly charging officers of the pickets that any woman entering

our lines by any means, and using that word with emphasis, is the spy I want, — that her use of it will be intended for the purpose of finding traitorous friends, and that any such woman, no matter upon what pretext she enters the lines, is to be arrested as soon as she uses the word. Only one of these words will be given out each day, but you will know them all, and use them in succession until you use the right one and are arrested. The words will be such as you can embody in an ordinary sentence without exciting the suspicion of any of the men who may be standing by, — for, of course, only officers will be commissioned to arrest you. You can use the words in different sentences, until you use the right one. Then you will be arrested and brought to my headquarters, where I hope to have a better dinner than that of to-day to offer you."

Just at that moment, the road along which they were riding passed between two abandoned fields, each of which was skirted by woodlands on its farther side. Stuart raised his head like a startled deer, and said:

"We must quit the road here, and put ourselves

behind that skirt of timber over on the left. Your horse will take the fence easily."

With that the pair pushed their animals over the rail fence on the left, and at a gallop rode across the field toward a little strip of young chestnut woodland that lay beyond. But just as they reached the centre of the field there came the zip, zip, zip of bullets striking the earth, the whiz of bullets passing their ears, and the weird whistle of bullets passing over them, one of which, now and then, turned somersaults in its course, and produced the peculiar sound that only bullets so misbehaving are capable of producing. At the same moment, the escort under Lieutenant Fauntleroy, who had been in front, fell back to protect its charge, as it was its duty to do. Stuart hurriedly said to the girl:

"Ride for your life to the chestnut-trees, and hide yourself there, while I take care of those fellows. I'll come to you when it's over."

With that he turned about, placed himself at the head of the little escort squad, and, swinging his sabre, as he always did in action, led them at a furious pace, over a fence and into the thicket from which the fire was coming. The few men

who were lurking there were quickly scattered, and abandoning their arms, they ran with all their might to the strong picket-post from which they had been thrown out to intercept him.

This done, all danger of further trouble was at an end, or would have been, had Stuart willed it so. But the scent of battle was always in his nostrils. His men were accustomed to say that he was always "looking for trouble," whenever there was the smallest chance of finding it. So instead of contenting himself with having dispersed the assailing party, he wheeled about to the right, and led his squad with the fury of Mameluke against the strong picket-post itself. Amid a hailstorm of bullets he charged through the half-company there posted, and then, turning about, charged back again, completing the work of destruction and dispersal.

It was not until this was over, and he had given the command, "Trot," that he saw Agatha by his side, her pistol in hand and empty of its charges, her hair loosened and falling in tangled masses over her shoulders, her face aglow, and her lithe form as erect as that of any trooper among them all.

"But my dear Miss Ronald," Stuart ejaculated, "what are you doing here?"

"Riding under gallant escort, General, that is all."

"But I ordered you to take refuge in the timber."

"Yes, I know," she answered, with a laughing challenge in her eyes, "but as I have never been mustered in, I'm not subject to your orders. You can't court-martial me, can you, General?"

Stuart looked at her before answering — his eyes full of an admiration that was dimmed by glad tears. At last he leaned over, kissed her again upon the forehead, and said, impressively:

"What a wife you'll make for a soldier some day!"

"'Riding under gallant escort'"

XIII

A souvenir service

DURING the rest of the journey Agatha was excited and full of enthusiasm. She had participated in a fight under the lead of the gallantest of cavaliers, and she had borne herself under fire in a way that had won his admiration. That admiration found expression in a hundred ways, and chiefly in pressing offers of service. Before their parting he said to her:

"Now, my dear Miss Agatha, you really must let me do you some favour. I want to cherish the memory of this day's glorious ride, and I want to render you some service, the memory of which may serve as a souvenir. What shall it be?"

At that moment there came to Agatha's mind one of those inspirations that come to all of us at times, quite without consciousness of whence they come or why. She answered:

"You are already doing everything for me,

General. You have sanctioned an enterprise on which I have set my heart, and you have done all you could to make it successful. You gave me for dinner to-day the very best ear of green corn that I ever tasted. You have personally and very gallantly escorted me back here to Fairfax Court-house, and on the way you have got up for me the most dramatic bit of action that I ever saw. I am convinced that you did it only for my entertainment, and I am truly grateful." Then with a sudden access of intense seriousness, she added, "And you have opened a way to me to render that service to my country which I had planned. Never, so long as you live, — and I hope that may be long for Virginia's sake, — will you know or imagine how great a service you have rendered me in this. But you insist upon doing more. You insist that I shall crave a boon at your hands. Very well; I will do so."

With that readiness of response which characterised everything that Stuart did, he seized the opportunity offered, and broke into Agatha's sentence with the answer:

"Of course I insist. What is it that I may do?"

"I want you to secure a captain's commission, then, for Sergeant-Major Baillie Pegram. You know all about his family. He volunteered as a private. He was promoted to be sergeant-major by Stonewall Jackson's own request, in recognition of his good conduct. He was terribly wounded at Manassas, mentioned in general orders, and strongly recommended for promotion for gallantry on the field. My aunts write to me —" here Agatha fibbed a little, as a woman is permitted to do under circumstances that might otherwise compromise her dignity, for it was not her aunts, but a highly intelligent negro maid in their service who kept the young lady informed as to Baillie Pegram's condition — "my aunts tell me he is getting well again, and will soon be ready for duty."

"What is his arm?" asked Stuart, eagerly.

"Light artillery," Agatha answered.

"Has he influence?"

"How do you mean?"

"Could he get men to enlist?"

"Why, of course. He's the master of Warlock, you know."

Then with a little touch of embarrassment, she

added, "I mean he is the head of one of the great families, and they always have influence."

"O, yes, of course," Stuart answered. "I see the situation clearly. Will you say to Mr. Pegram — Sergeant-Major Pegram, I mean — that I have authority from the War Department to raise three companies of flying artillery, with the men all mounted, to serve with the cavalry, and that if he can form such a company, — of fifty or seventy-five men, or better still a hundred men — I will secure him a captain's commission with authority to do so?"

"But, General," said the girl, quickly, and in manifest fright, "I do not correspond with Mr. Pegram. In fact we are *very nearly strangers.*"

"O, I see," answered the cavalier, with a twinkle in his eyes. "How long has it been since you and this gallant young gentleman arranged to be 'very nearly strangers?'"

"O, you entirely mistake, General," the girl quickly answered. "Really and truly I never knew Mr. Pegram very well; but he wore a red feather of mine at the battle of Manassas, and afterward he sent it back to me and — well, anyhow he proved his gallantry and he really ought

to be something more than a sergeant-major, don't you think?"

For answer Stuart made a sweeping bow, removing his hat and saying: "Concerning Sergeant-Major Baillie Pegram, I think whatever you think. Anyhow, as he had the good taste to wear your red feather, and as he has fought well enough to secure a wound and a mention in general orders and your personal approval, he shall be a captain if he wants to be. Give me his address, and you need not have any correspondence with him."

"I'll write it," she answered, "if you'll excuse me for a moment," and with that she retired within doors — for they had been standing in the porch — in a rage of vexation with herself. She hastily sponged off her inflamed face with cold water, dried it, and loosely twisted up her errant hair, which had run riot over her neck and shoulders ever since the little encounter with the enemy. Then she scribbled Baillie Pegram's Warlock address on a scrap of paper and returned to Stuart's presence, with the mien and bearing of a queen.

The cavalier's face was rippling all over with

smiles as he bade her adieu, wished her Godspeed in her enterprise, and turned away. At the steps he faced about, and advancing said to her:

"When do you wish to return to Fauquier?"

"I shall go home to-morrow morning," she answered.

"You travel in your own carriage, of course?"

"Yes, and my maid is with me."

"Very well," he answered. "At sunrise a platoon under command of a trusty officer will report here and serve as your escort."

"But, General, surely that is not necessary."

"Not necessary, perhaps," was the answer, "but it pleases me to have it so, and you'll indulge my fancy, I am sure. I hope to have you as my prisoner before many moons have passed."

She understood, and with a rippling smile she replied:

"Thank you, and good-bye. I shall certainly enjoy my next ear of green corn if I am permitted to take it in your company, under some tree that you have honoured by making it your head-quarters."

"O, my ravenous cavalrymen will have eaten up all the green corn long before that time; but

I'll give you a dinner if I have to raid a Federal picket-post to get it."

With that he sprang into his saddle, waved a farewell, and rode away singing:

"If you want to have a good time,
Jine the cavalry,
Jine the cavalry,
Jine the cavalry,
If you want to have a good time,
Jine the cavalry,
Jine the cav-al-ry."

It was Stuart's boast at that time that he knew the face and name of every man in his old first regiment, and he afterward extended this boast to include all the men in the first brigade of Virginia Cavalry. He used to say: "I ought to remember those fellows; they made me a major-general."

But however well Stuart knew his men, with whom he fraternised in a way very unusual to most officers bred in the regular army, as he had been, nobody ever pretended to know him well enough to guess with any accuracy what he would do next under any given circumstances. On this occasion he had not brought his staff with him, but that made small difference with an officer of

his temper, whose habit of mind it was to disregard forms and ceremonies, and to go straight to his purpose, whatever it might happen to be. When he left Agatha, he rode at once to the camp of a detached company and asked for its captain. To him he said:

"Send couriers to all the cavalry camps, and say that General Stuart orders the entire force to report in front at once."

He designated three roads and four bridle-paths by which the commands were to move; and three or four points of rendezvous. Then he added:

"Let the men move light — no baggage or blankets or anything else but arms and ammunition."

A moment later he met Colonel Fitzhugh Lee, who had succeeded him in command of the old first regiment, — "my Mamelukes," as Stuart loved to call them. The two grasped hands, and Stuart said: "I've ordered everybody to the front. You are to take command on the left. We must drive the Federal pickets back from all their advanced posts. They are growing impudent. They fired at a lady under my personal

escort to-day. We must teach them not to repeat that."

Of course the men who had done the firing in question had no means of knowing that there was a woman among the assailed, and Stuart knew the fact very well. But he chose to regard whatever happened as something intended.

Turning from Lee, he galloped to the camp of some batteries, and said to the officer in command:

"I wish you'd lend me a couple of guns or so for the afternoon. I've some work to do. Send them out along the Falls Church road. I'll not have to go borrowing guns after a little while. I'll have some mounted batteries of my own."

The officer addressed issued the necessary orders as quietly as a gentleman in his own house might bid a servant bring a glass of water for a thirsty guest. No questions were asked on either side, and no explanations offered. It is not the military fashion to ask unnecessary questions or to give needless explanations.

By this time the cavalry regiments were streaming by on their hurried way to the front, saluting Stuart as they passed, and now and then cheering, as they were apt to do when they saw

their gallant leader. He in his turn nodded and bowed in acknowledgment, and now and then called out a cheery word of greeting. He would be at the head of all these fellows presently, and they knew that "the performance would not begin," as they were in the habit of saying, till he should be there to lead. But meanwhile he had something else to attend to, for Stuart never forgot anything that he wanted to remember, however engrossingly he might be engaged with other affairs. Riding up to a tent before which Colonel Field was standing awaiting his horse, he asked:

"Is your adjutant with you, Field?"

"No — he has gone on with orders, but his orderly is here, General."

"That will do as well." Then turning to the orderly, who had appeared, he said:

"Take down a paper from dictation, please. When it is written out, bring it to me at the front for signature."

The dictation was as follows:

"General J. E. B. Stuart, commanding the cavalry, respectfully reports that in pursuance of the authorisation of the War Department, he has

selected Sergeant-Major Baillie Pegram, of ——'s battery, as one of the persons to be commissioned captain of artillery and authorised to raise a mounted battery to serve with the cavalry. General Stuart begs to report that Sergeant-Major Pegram's character and qualifications are abundantly certified, and that he has already been mentioned in general orders and recommended for promotion for conspicuous gallantry in the battle of Manassas. He is at present at his home, recovering from a severe wound received in that action. All of which is respectfully submitted."

"There!" said Stuart, when the dictation was done. "Write that out, fold and indorse it properly, and bring it to me at the front for signature. Then forward it through the regular channels."

Then Stuart put spurs to his horse, and galloped to the front. There he made hurried disposition of the various commands, and half an hour later hurled his whole force precipitately upon all the Federal outposts on the ten-mile line. The onset was sudden and resistless, and within a brief while every picket-post of the enemy was

abandoned, and a new line of observation established many miles nearer to Washington City.

With that tireless energy and that sleepless vigilance in attention to details which always characterised the conduct of this typical chevalier, Stuart spent the entire night following this day's work in visiting his new outposts, from one end of the line to the other. Yet when morning came he breakfasted upon an ear of raw corn and a laugh, and rode on to Munson's Hill to learn what signals had been received from his agents in Washington during the night.

XIV

Quick work

IT was a warm, soft day in autumn, joyous in its sunshine, sad in its suggestions of the year's decay. Baillie Pegram, now nearly well again, but still lacking strength, was lolling on the closely clipped sward under one of the great trees at Warlock, chatting disjointedly with Marshall Pollard, who had got away again on a few days' leave of absence, for the purpose of visiting his friend. Baillie had already written to his captain, reporting himself as nearly well again, expressing regret at his long absence from duty, and announcing his purpose of rejoining the battery within a week or ten days at furthest — "at the earliest time," he said, "when I can persuade the surgeons to release me from their clutches." This was likely, therefore, to be the last meeting between the two friends for many moons to come.

"Tell me about yourself, old fellow," said

Baillie, after a pause in the conversation. "How do you like your service in that battery of ruffians?"

"Thoroughly well. They're not half-bad fellows when kept under military discipline, and I've enjoyed studying them psychologically. I'm convinced that the only reason society has failed so consummately in its attempts to deal with the criminal class is that it hasn't taken pains to understand them or find out their point of view. We really haven't taken pains enough even to classify them, or to find out the differences there are among them. We class them all together — all who violate the law — and call them criminals, and proceed to deal with them as if they were a totally different species from ourselves, whereas, in point of fact, they are 'men like unto ourselves,' with like passions and desires and impulses. The only real difference is that circumstances and education and association have taught us to curb our passions and hold our impulses in check, while they have run wild, obeying those instincts which are born in all of us.

"They are usually very generous fellows — impulsive, affectionate, and loyal to such friend-

ships as they know. If you discovered any wrong being done to me, or heard any unjust accusation made against me, you'd resist and resent instantly. But you'd know precisely how far and in what direction to carry your resentment, while these fellows do not know anything except the instincts of a righteous wrath. There isn't a man in Skinner's Battery who wouldn't be quick to stand for me and by me. But in doing so he would calmly kill the man who injured me, and never be able to understand why he must be hanged for doing so.

"Most of them have been made hardened criminals solely by society's blundering way of dealing with them. It has sent them to jail, for small first offences, committed in ignorance perhaps. It has thus declared war upon them, and with the instincts of manhood they have taken up the gage of battle. In other words, it is my sincere belief that quite nine in ten of the criminal class are criminal only because of society's neglect at first and blundering afterward. They need education and discipline; we give them resentful punishment instead, and there is a world of difference between the two things.

"However, I did not mean to deliver a lecture on penology. And after all I am no longer one of the ruffians, you know. All the officers of the battery are gentlemen, while none of the men happens to be anything of the kind. There is, therefore, as sharp a line of demarcation drawn in our battery, between officers and enlisted men, as there is in any regular army. This makes things pleasant for the officers, and I fancy they are not unpleasant for the men. It is a case of aristocracy where the upper class enjoys itself and the lower class is content. It is quite different from service in an ordinary Confederate company of volunteers. There the enlisted men are socially quite as good as their officers and sometimes distinctly better. Under such circumstances it is difficult to maintain more of distinction and discipline than the enlisted men may voluntarily consent to. Socially, with us Southern people, it is quite as honourable to be an enlisted man in such a battery as yours as to be a commissioned officer. That's a good enough thing in its way, but it isn't military, and it is distinctly bad for the service."

"I don't know so well about that," said Baillie.

"We have at least the advantage of knowing that, discipline or no discipline, every man in the ranks, equally with every officer, has a personal reputation at home to sustain by good conduct. Even your desperadoes couldn't fight better than the young fellows I had with me on the skirmish-line at Manassas, though they had never had anything resembling discipline to sustain them. Every man of them knew that if he 'flunked' he could never go home again — unless all flunked at once and so kept each other company. That very nearly happened while we were falling back across Bull Run."

"Precisely. And it happened to the whole Federal army a few hours later. Discipline, with a ready pistol-shot behind it, would have prevented that in both cases. 'Man's a queer animal,' you know, if you remember your reading, and one of the queerest things about him is that when he has once accustomed himself to accept orders unquestioningly, and to obey them blindly, as every soldier does in drilling, he becomes far more afraid of mere orders than he is of the heaviest fire. Personal courage and high spirit among the men are admirable in their way, but

for the purposes of battle, discipline and the habit of blind obedience are very much more trustworthy. If you want to make soldiers of men, you must teach them, morning, noon, and night, that blind, unquestioning obedience is the only virtue they can cultivate. That isn't good for the personal characters of the men, of course, but it is necessary in the case of soldiers, and our volunteers will all of them have to learn the lesson before this war is over. More's the pity, for I can't imagine how a whole nation of men so trained to submission can ever again become a nation of — oh, confound it! I'm running off again into a psychological speculation. Fortunately, here comes a letter for you."

A servant approached, bearing upon a tray a missive from The Oaks ladies, which had been delivered at the house a few minutes earlier. The grand dames assured Mr. Baillie Pegram of their highest respect and esteem, but suggested that, to the very great satisfaction of the anxiety they had so long felt on his account, they were convinced by his assurances to that effect, that he was now so far advanced on the road to complete recovery as perhaps to excuse them from the

necessity of making their thrice a week journey to Warlock to inquire concerning his welfare. If they were mistaken in this assumption, would not Mr. Baillie Pegram kindly notify them? And if the daily inquiries which they intended to make hereafter through a trusty servant, should at any moment bring to them news of a relapse, they would instantly resume their personal and most solicitous inquiries.

To this Baillie laughingly wrote a reply equally formal, in which he assured the good ladies that their tender concern for him during his illness had been a chief factor in a recovery which was now practically complete.

Meantime Sam had come with the mail-pouch from the post-office, and it held two letters for Baillie.

One of these was a formal and official communication from the War Department, informing him that upon General J. E. B. Stuart's recommendation, he had been appointed captain of artillery with authority to raise a mounted battery of from fifty to one hundred men, for service with the cavalry. His commission, dating from the day of his wound at Manassas, accompanied the

document, and with it an order for him to proceed, as soon as he should be fit for service, to enlist and organise the company thus authorised, and to make the proper requisitions for arms and equipments.

Baillie's second letter was a personal one from Stuart. It was scribbled in pencil on the envelopes of some old letters and such other fragments of paper as the cavalier could command at some picket-post. It read:

"I have asked the War Department to commission you as a captain, to raise a company of mounted artillery to serve with me in front. I understand that you have a healthy liking for the front. The War Department lets me choose my own men for this service, and I have chosen you first, for several reasons. One is that you know what to do with a gun. Another is that you fought so well at Manassas. Another is that you are very strongly recommended to me by a person whose judgment is absolutely conclusive to my mind.

"Now get to work as quickly as you can. Enrol fifty or seventy-five, or better still a hundred men if you can find them. Put them in

camp and instruct them, and report to me the moment you are ready. Make requisition for guns — six of them if you can secure a hundred men — and drill your men at the piece. For a hundred men in *mounted* artillery you will need about 170 horses — 100 for the cannoniers to ride and 70 for the guns, etc. There is likely to be your difficulty. Can't you help yourself out a bit? I am told that you have influence. Can't you persuade your neighbours to contribute some at least of the horses you need? The quicker your battery is horsed the quicker you'll get a chance to practise your men in gunnery with the enemy for a target. Please send me a personal line, telling me how soon you will be ready to join me. It will take a month or two, of course, but I hope it won't take more."

Twelve hours later Baillie Pegram sent an answer to General Stuart's letter. In it he said:

"Thank you. I'll have the men and the horses within twenty-four hours. If the guns are promptly forthcoming on my requisition, I'll be ready within two days to receive orders to join you. As for drill, I can attend to that in front

of Washington as well as in camp of instruction at Richmond."

But before sending that note, which delighted Stuart's soul when it came, Baillie Pegram had done a world of earnest work.

First of all there was the problem of getting the men. The able-bodied citizens of the county had already volunteered for the most part, but some were still waiting for one reason or another, and Baillie, who knew everybody, sent hurried notes to all of these, by special negro messengers, asking each to send an immediate reply to him at the Court-house. On this service he employed all his young negroes, mounting them on all his mules. The men appealed to responded almost to a man, for the master of Warlock was a man under whose command his neighbours eagerly wanted to serve, and Baillie found more than half of them awaiting him at the county seat, when he got there in mid-afternoon.

Still better, he found a messenger there from one of the men whom he had summoned. This messenger came from a camp at a little distance, where were assembled about sixty or seventy men

and boys peculiarly situated. These men and boys had belonged to a company composed mainly of college students, which had gone out with the earliest volunteers. The company had been captured at Rich Mountain, and the men composing it had been sent home on parole. Within the two days preceding Baillie Pegram's call for volunteers, official notification had come of the discharge of all these men from parole by virtue of an exchange of prisoners. Thereupon the men, thus left free to volunteer again, had met in camp to consider what should be done. Their company had been officially disbanded, and there were now not enough of them left to secure its reorganisation. When Baillie Pegram's call for volunteers came, therefore, the men were called together, and in pursuance of a resolution, unanimously adopted, a messenger was sent to the Court-house to say that sixty-two men of the disbanded company offered themselves for enrolment under Captain Pegram, and that they would report for duty on the following morning at the Court-house.

Thus before four o'clock Baillie was assured of his hundred men or more. The next problem

was to secure horses. He called together such of his men as were present, and said:

"Each of you is mounted. We shall need your horses. The government will have them valued, and will pay the assessed price for any that may die in the service. It will pay monthly for their services. How many of you will enlist your horses as well as yourselves, as all our cavalrymen have done?"

The response was general, and many of the planters offered additional horses on the same terms, so that before night fell Baillie Pegram had more than a hundred men and about a hundred and thirty horses secured. Forty or fifty more horses must be had, but Baillie knew how to secure them, and so he sent off his note to Stuart. Then he turned to Marshall Pollard, and said:

"I want you to go to Richmond by the midnight train, old fellow, and return by the noonday train to-morrow. I've a mind to complete this business at a stroke. I've a few thousand dollars in bank and a few thousand more in the hands of my commission merchant. The money is worth its face now. Heaven only knows what it will be

worth a year hence. I'm going to spend it now for the rest of the horses I need, and I want you to go to Richmond and bring it to me. In the meanwhile I'll bargain with a drover who is not very far away, for the horses."

Then, weak as he was, Baillie planned to ride the dozen miles that lay between the Court-house and the point where the drover was camping with his horses, but one of his friends, who had just enlisted with him, bade him to go to the tavern and to bed, saying:

"I'll have the drover and his horses here before noon to-morrow, and I shall know something about the horses by that time, too, for I'll come back in company with them, and I'll keep my eyes open."

No sooner was Baillie comfortably stretched upon a lounge in his hotel room, than Sam presented himself.

"Mas' Baillie," the negro boy broke in, without waiting for his master to ask how he came to be there, "Mas' Baillie, you's a-gwine to be one o' de officers now, jes' as you ought to ha' been fust off. Now you'll need Sam wid you, won't you?"

"I'll need somebody, I suppose," the young man answered, with a laugh at Sam's enthusiasm, "but if I take you along where I am going, you'll stand a mighty good chance of getting a bullet-hole through you, or having your black head knocked off your shoulders by a shell. Have you thought of that?"

"Co'se I'se thought o' dat, an' I ain't de leas' bit afeard nuther. I'se a Pegram nigga from Warlock, I is, an' a Pegram nigga from Warlock ain't got no more business to be afeared o' bullets when his duty brings 'em in his way, dan a white folks Pegram hisself is. Ef ye'll jes' take Sam along of you, you sha'n't never have no 'casion to be shamed o' yer servant."

"Very well, Sam," answered the master; "now go back to Warlock, and tell your mammy you're going to the war. By the way, you may have that old velveteen and corduroy hunting suit of mine to wear. Get it from the closet in the chamber, and tell your mammy to shorten the trousers legs by seven or eight inches."

Sam was fairly dancing for joy, and as he mounted his mule for the homeward journey, he began to sing a dismal ditty which he had com-

posed as an expression of his feelings at the time of his master's first departure from Warlock to serve as a soldier. Unhappily only a fragment of the song remains to us. It began:

"Dey ain't no sun in de mawning,
Dey ain't no moon shine in de night,
'Case the war's done come an' de mahstah's done gone,
Fer to git hisse'f killed in de fight.

"Oh, Moses!
Holy Moses!
Can't you come back 'cross de ribber?
Can't you let Gabrel blow his horn?"

What lines were to follow, and what words rhymed with "ribber" and "horn," we are not permitted to know. For at this point, Sam, whose self-education included a considerable proficiency in profanity, broke off his singing, reined in his mule, and said:

"Dat's too *dam* dismal fer de 'casion!" Then addressing the mule, he reproachfully asked:

"What for you done let me sing dat? Don' you know Sam's a-gwine to de wah wid Mas' Baillie?"

As the mule made no reply, the conversation ceased at this point, and the remainder of the homeward journey was made in complete silence.

XV

Agatha's venture

AFTER a month or two of cautious correspondence with friends and others who were to aid her in carrying out her purpose, Agatha Ronald set out one day, and drove with Martha, her maid, to Winchester, where she had friends. After a week's stay there, she made her way to a little town on the Potomac, again taking up quarters with friends.

From this point, she communicated through her friends with intimates of theirs who lived in Maryland. Finally she had arrangements made by which a succession of houses was open to her, all of them the homes of people strongly in sympathy with the South. But she must first manage to get through the Federal lines unobserved, and in this a Federal commander unwittingly aided her. He threw a small force one day into the little town in which she was staying,

meaning to hold possession of it as a part of the loosely drawn lines on the upper river. This left Agatha within Federal domain — a young gentlewoman visiting friends, and in no way attracting attention to herself. Presently she moved on into Maryland, and by short stages made her way to the house of a very ardent Southern family, near the Pennsylvania border. From there it was easy for her to go to Harrisburg, and thence by rail to Baltimore.

The chief purpose of her journey was now practically accomplished. She had established what she called her "underground railroad," with a multitude of stations, and a very roundabout route. But it would serve its purpose all the better for that, she thought, as the chief condition of its successful operation was that its existence should at no time be suspected.

In Baltimore, proceeding with the utmost caution, she put herself into indirect communication with a large number of "Dixie girls" — as young women in that city whose hearts were with the South were called. It would not do for her to meet these young women personally. That might excite suspicion, especially as most of them

had brothers in the Southern army. But through others she succeeded in organising them secretly into a band prepared to do her work.

That work was the purchase of medicines — chiefly morphine and quinine — and the smuggling of them through the lines into the Confederacy for the use of the armies there. For it is one of the barbarisms of war which civilisation has not yet outgrown, that medicines, even those which are imperatively necessary for the saving of life and the prevention of suffering, are held to be as strictly contraband as gunpowder itself is.

Agatha's plan was to have her associates in Baltimore purchase medicines and surgical appliances in that city and elsewhere — buying only in small quantities in each case, in order to avoid suspicion, but buying large quantities in the aggregate — and forward them to her in Virginia by way of her underground railroad; that is to say, passing them from hand to hand over the route by which she had herself reached Baltimore.

Having perfected these arrangements, her next task was herself to get back to her home, whither she did not mean to go empty-handed. She had gowns made for herself and Martha, using two

thicknesses of oiled silk as interlining. Between these she bestowed as much morphia as could be placed there without attracting attention.

This done, she was ready for her return journey, which presented extraordinary difficulty. She could not return by the way she had come, lest the purpose of her journey should be discovered, and her plans for the future be thwarted. She must find some other way.

At first she thought of making her way southward to the lower reaches of the Potomac, and depending upon chance for means of getting across the river there, but this was rendered impracticable by the news that the Confederates had retired from their advanced outposts to Manassas and Centreville, with the Fairfax Courthouse line as their extreme advance position. This meant, of course, that they no longer held in any considerable force the posts along the lower river. Moreover, Agatha learned that both the Potomac below Washington, and the navigable part of the Rappahannock were closely patrolled now, by night and by day, by a numerous fleet of big and little Federal war-ships. There seemed no course open to her but to try in some way to get

through to Stuart's pickets, if in any way or at any risk she could manage that. That she determined to attempt.

Her first step was to visit friends on the Potomac above Washington. There she learned minutely what the situation was. With some difficulty she secured permission to go as a guest to a house near Falls Church, in Virginia. She had hoped there to find Confederate picket-posts, and to work her way to some one of them by stealth or strategy, or by boldly taking risks. She found instead that the nearest Confederate outpost was at Fairfax Court-house, nine miles away, while the inner Federal lines lay on the route from Falls Church to Vienna, and stretched both ways from those points. Stuart was no longer at Mason's and Munson's Hills. With the approach of winter the Confederates had retired to their fortified line, and Stuart, with the cavalry, had established himself at Camp Cooper and other camps, three or four miles in rear of the Fairfax Court-house line, which now constituted his extreme advance.

Moreover, the Federal army, under McClellan's skilled and vigilant command, had been com-

pletely reorganised, drilled, disciplined, and converted from the chaotic mass described in his report — quoted in a former chapter — into an alert and trustworthy army, destined, during later campaigns, to cover itself with glory. At present, McClellan, who had no thought of advancing upon Centreville and Manassas, where the Confederates were strongly fortified, was at any rate manifesting spirit by continually pressing the Confederate outposts, and now and then making considerable demonstrations against them.

His inner picket-lines, as already explained, were drawn very near the house in which Agatha was sojourning. His advanced posts — where the skirmishing was frequent — were along the Fairfax Court-house line. Between these two lines lay eight or ten miles of thick and difficult country, held by the Federals, and scouted over every day, but not regularly picketed.

Thus, instead of a mile or two of difficulty, Agatha had before her ten miles of trouble, with a prospect of worse at the end of it.

Time and extraordinary care were necessary to meet these new difficulties. Agatha's first problem was to find out all she could of facts,

to gather exact and trustworthy information. In this endeavour she had a shrewdly intelligent co-adjutor in Martha.

By way of avoiding suspicion — for the family with whom she was staying were known to be strongly Southern in their sympathies, and the Federal officers had begun to understand the devoted loyalty of the negroes to the families that owned them — Agatha established Martha in a cabin of her own a mile or more from the house. There Martha posed as a free negro woman, who was disposed to make a living for herself by selling fried chickens, biscuits, and pies to the Federal soldiers on the interior picket-lines, and a little later to those posted farther in advance.

Martha was a sagacious as well as a discreet person. At first she showed a timid reluctance to go farther toward the front than the inner lines from Falls Church to Vienna. While peddling her wares there, she took pains to learn all the foot-paths, and the location of all the picket-posts in that region. Then little by little she allowed herself to be persuaded to go farther toward the outer lines, for the soldiers found her

fried chicken and her biscuits and her pies particularly alluring.

It was only after she had mastered both the topography of the country between, and the exact methods of its military occupation, that she so far overcame her assumed timidity as to push on with her basket to the picket-posts immediately in front of Fairfax Court-house itself. She raised her prices as she went, lest by selling out her stock in trade she should leave herself no excuse for going to the extreme front at all. For the same reason she came at last to pass by many posts where she had formerly had good customers, retaining her wares professedly for the sake of the higher prices that the men at the front gladly paid for something better to eat than the contents of their haversacks.

Within a week or two Martha had learned and reported to her mistress quite all that any officer on either side knew of the country, its roads, its foot-paths, its difficulties, and the opportunities it afforded. In the middle of every night, Martha made her way to her mistress, or her mistress made her way to Martha, until at last, Agatha, who had directed her inquiries, was equipped with

all necessary information, and ready for her supreme endeavour. It involved much of danger and incredible difficulty. But the courageous young woman was prepared to meet both danger and difficulty with an equable mind. She knew now whither she was going and how, but the journey through a difficult country must be made wholly on foot and wholly by night.

Agatha was ready for the ordeal. As for Martha, the earth to the very ends of it held no terrors that could cause even hesitation on her part in the service of her mistress.

XVI

Canister

IT was a little after midnight when Agatha and her maid, stripped of all belongings that could impede them on their way, set out on foot upon their perilous journey. Agatha was deliberately exposing herself to far worse dangers than any that the soldier is called upon to brave in the work of war. She could carry little in the way of food, and of course could not replenish her supplies until she should succeed in entering the Confederate lines, if indeed that purpose were not hopeless of accomplishment at all. But the danger of starvation which these conditions involved, was the very least of the perils she must encounter. At any moment of her stealthy progress she might be shot by a sentinel. Far worse than that, she might be seized with her telltale medicines upon her person, while hiding within the forbidden lines of the enemy. In that case,

there would be no question whatever as to her status in military law, or as to her fate. If she should fall into the enemy's hands under such circumstances, by forcible capture or even by voluntary surrender, she must certainly be hanged as a spy. She was armed against that danger only by the possession of the means of instant self-destruction, — her little six-shooter.

It was comparatively easy for her to find her way during the first night, through the slender interior picket-line, and into the forbidden region that lay between that and the outposts in front. Every roadway leading toward the Confederate positions was, of course, securely guarded, and all of them were thus completely closed to Agatha's use. She must steal through the thickets of underbrush that lay between the roads, making such progress as she could without at any time placing herself within sight or hearing of a sentinel. Sometimes this involved prolonged waiting in constrained positions, and several times she narrowly missed discovery.

When morning came, the pair of women hid themselves between two logs that lay in a dense thicket, and there they remained throughout the

daylight hours. There, too, before noon, they consumed the last fragments of their food.

During the next night they made small progress. They succeeded, indeed, in crossing a deep and muddy creek that lay in front of them, but it was only to find themselves confronted by a roadway, which ran athwart their line of march, and which, on this night, at least, was heavily picketed and constantly patrolled by scouting squads of cavalry.

Agatha crept on her hands and knees, and quite noiselessly, to a point from which she could make out the situation, and there the pair remained in hiding among the weeds and bushes that skirted an old and partially destroyed fence, until daylight came again.

With the daylight came a considerable thinning of the line of videttes in front, and toward nightfall, after a day of toilsome crawling back and forth in search of a way of escape, the two women succeeded in crossing the road unobserved. After crawling for a hundred yards or so beyond the road, they hid themselves as securely as they could, and waited for night to come again.

They were suffering the pangs of excessive hunger and thirst now, and gnawing roots and twigs by way of appeasing the terrible craving. It was obvious to Agatha that this night must make an end of her attempt in one way or another. She must reach the Confederate lines before the coming of another day, or both she and her companion must perish of hunger, or surrender themselves and be hanged. She suggested this thought to Martha, whose only answer was:

"Anyhow, you'se got your pistol, Miss Agatha."

There were still two miles or more to go before reaching the little patch of briars and young chestnut-trees just in front of the Fairfax Court-house village, which was Agatha's objective. During her peddling trips, Martha had learned that Federal sharpshooters were thrown into this thicket every night, usually between midnight and morning, for the purpose of annoying the Confederate pickets, stationed not fifty yards away. She had learned, too, that nearly every morning, about daylight, the Confederates were accustomed to rid themselves of the annoyance by sending out a cavalry force to charge the

thicket and clear it of its occupants. It was Agatha's plan to hide herself and her maid there, and be captured by Stuart's men when they should come.

But she could not enter the bushes until the sharpshooters should be in position. Otherwise they would be sure to discover her while placing themselves. As soon as the riflemen had crept to their posts, Agatha, favoured by the unusual darkness of a thickly clouded night, crept to a hiding-place just in rear of the men. There she and Martha lay upon the ground during long hours, well-nigh famished, and suffering severely from cold, for the autumn was now well advanced.

Unfortunately for Agatha's plan, the Confederates had adopted new methods for this night. Instead of ordering cavalry to clear the thicket, they had decided to clear it with canister. Accordingly, a battery of artillery had been ordered to the front, and bivouacked half a mile in rear of Fairfax Court-house. Thence just before daylight two guns had been dragged forward by prolonge ropes, and stationed under the trees of a little grove about fifty yards in front of the

cover from which the Federal sharpshooters were occasionally firing.

Just at dawn, these two guns suddenly and furiously opened upon the bushes with canister in double charges.

The effect was terrific. The bushes were mown down as with a scythe, and it seemed impossible to the two women that any human being should survive the iron hailstorm for a single minute. The sharpshooters scurried away precipitately, one of them actually stumbling over Agatha's prostrate form, which he probably took to be that of some comrade slain. But Agatha and her maid remained, and the fearful fire continued. They remained because there was nothing else for them to do. They could not retreat. They could not surrender. They were starving. They must go forward or die.

Then the courage and daring of her race came to Agatha's soul, and she resolved to make a last desperate attempt to save herself, not by running away from the fire, — which would be worse than useless, — but by running into it. The danger in doing this was scarcely greater, in fact, though it seemed so, than that involved in lying still,

but it requires an extraordinary courage for one unarmed and not inspired by the desperate all-daring spirit of battle, to rush upon guns that are belching canister in half-gallon charges, at the rate of three or four times a minute.

The sharpshooters were completely gone now, and nothing lay between the young woman and her friends except a canister-swept open space fifty yards in width. This the heroic girl — baffled of all other resource — determined to dare. Directing Martha to follow her closely, she rose and in the gray of the dawn ran like a deer toward the bellowing guns. Fortunately, some one at the guns caught sight of the fleet-footed pair when they had covered about half the distance, and, in the increasing light, saw them to be women. Instantly the order, "Cease firing!" was given, and the clamorous cannon were hushed, but a heavy musketry fire from the enemy broke forth just as Agatha and her maid fell exhausted between the guns. A voice of command rang out:

"Pick up those women, quick, and carry them out of the fire!" Half a dozen of the men responded, and strong arms carried the nearly lifeless women to a small depression just in rear,

where they were screened from the now slowly slackening shower of bullets.

When the fire had completely ceased, Captain Baillie Pegram ordered his guns, "By hand to the rear," and rode back to inquire concerning his captives. It was then that he discovered for the first time who the fugitives were, and the horror with which he realised what he supposed to be the situation, set him reeling in his saddle.

He had heard nothing of Agatha's mission to the north, of course. He now knew only that she had been hiding within the enemy's lines, and only one interpretation of that fact seemed possible. Agatha Ronald—the woman he loved, the woman upon whose integrity and Virginianism he would have staked his life without a second thought—had turned traitor! He did not pause to ask himself how, in such a case, she had come to be in the thicket among the sharpshooters. He was too greatly stunned to think of that, or otherwise to reason clearly.

Nor did he question her, except to ask if she or her maid had been wounded, and when she assured him of their safety, he said:

"I don't know whether to thank God for that

or not. It might have been better, perhaps, if both had fallen."

Agatha heard the remark, and understood in part at least the thought that lay behind it. But she did not reply. She only said, feebly:

"We are starving."

"Bring two horses, quickly," Baillie commanded. "Lieutenant Mills, take the guns back to the bivouac. Our work here is done."

Then turning to Agatha, he explained:

"We have no rations here; can you manage to ride as far as our bivouac? It is only half a mile away, and we'll find something to eat there."

Agatha's exhaustion was so great that she could scarcely sit up, but she summoned all her resolution and managed to hold herself in place on the McClellan saddle which alone was available for her use. Martha was carried by the men on an improvised litter.

At the bivouac, no food was found except a pone or two of coarse corn bread and a few slices of uncooked bacon. But the delicate girl and her maid devoured these almost greedily, eating the bacon raw in soldier fashion, for, of course, no fires were allowed upon the picket-line.

Food and rest quickly revived Agatha, and Baillie remembered certain very peremptory orders he had received as to his course of procedure should "any woman whatever" come into his lines.

"I must escort you presently to a safer place than this," he said.

"Am I to go under *compulsion,* Captain Pegram," the girl asked, "or of my own *accord?*"

"With that," he answered, "I am afraid I have nothing to do. My sole concern is to take you out of danger. It is not my business to ask you questions as to how you have come into danger in a way so peculiar."

"And yet," she replied, "that is a matter that I suppose requires *inquiry,* and I am ready for the *ordeal.*"

The moment she spoke that word, which was the fourth in the series that Stuart had given her, and the one he had selected as a test for this day, Baillie Pegram flinched as if he had been struck, while his face turned white. Hoping that her use of the word had been accidental, or that the emphasis she had placed upon it had been unintended, he asked:

"What did you say?"

"I said," she responded, very deliberately, "that I am ready for the *ordeal*."

The look of consternation on Baillie's face deepened. Without replying, he walked away in an agitation of mind which he felt must be hidden from others at all costs. Pacing back and forth under screen of some bushes, he tried to think the matter out. Under his orders, he must arrest Agatha and take her to Stuart, who had been more than usually anxious, as Baillie knew, to capture this particular prisoner. But to do that, he felt, must mean Agatha's disgrace and shameful death, and the staining of an ancient and honoured name. Yet what else could he do?

"Would to God!" he exclaimed, under his breath, "that my canister had done its work better!"

Then he fell into silence again, questioning himself in the vain hope of finding a way through the blind wall of circumstances.

"Agatha," he thought, "has been with the enemy, and has been trying to get back again in order to render them some further traitorous service. Stuart has obviously learned all about the conspiracy in which she had been engaged. That

is why he has been so eager for her arrest. That is how he knew what signal-words she would use in her endeavour to find some fellow conspirator among us. But why did she use the word to me. Surely the conspiracy cannot have become so wide-spread among us that she deemed *me* a person likely to be engaged in it. Perhaps she spoke for other ears than mine, hoping to find a traitor among those who stood by.

"And the worst of it is that I still love her. Knowing her treachery and her shame, I still cannot change my attitude of mind. What shall I do? I could turn traitor for her sake. I could manage to secure her escape, and then give myself up, confess my crime, and accept the shameful death that it would merit."

For the space of a minute he lingered over this idea of supreme self-sacrifice with which the devil seemed to be luring him to destruction. Then he cast it aside, and reproached himself for having let it enter his mind.

"No love is worth a man's honour," he thought. "A better way would be to kill her myself, and then commit suicide. No, not that.

"'I love you, Agatha Ronald'"

Suicide is the coward's way out; and killing her would only reveal and emphasise her crime."

Just then one of his men approached him, and announced that orders had come for the battery's return to its camp. Baillie walked back to the bivouac, and said to his lieutenant:

"Take command and march to the camp at once. I have some personal orders to execute."

With that promptitude which all men serving under Stuart learned to regard as one of the cardinal virtues, the lieutenant had the battery mounted and in motion within a few minutes. Not until it had made the turn in the road did Baillie approach Agatha. Then he faced her, and staring with strained and bloodshot eyes into her face, he abruptly said:

"I love you, Agatha Ronald. In spite of what you have done, that fact remains. I love you!"

"This is neither the time nor place in which to tell me so," she interrupted. Then, after a brief moment of hesitation, she broke down and burst into tears. It was only a very few moments before she controlled herself, and forced herself to speak clearly, though she did so with manifest difficulty.

"Please forget what you have just said," she began. "I realise your position. I understand. I think I know what you have been thinking. You have contemplated a crime for my sake,—the highest crime of all. For my sake you have been tempted to sacrifice not only your life — which to a brave man means little — but your honour, which is more precious to a brave man than all else in the world. Tell me, please, and tell me quickly, that you have put that temptation aside — that you have utterly repudiated the horrible thought."

"I have done so certainly," he replied, in a hard voice. "But why do you care so much for that?"

"Why? Because your honour — all honour — is precious to me, and I could not respect you if you had consented to the thought of dishonour even in your mind. I should loathe and detest your soul if for my sake or any sake you could have done that. No, don't interrupt me, please," seeing that he was trying to speak, "let me finish. I, too, am under orders, one of which is to keep my lips sealed. But under such circumstances as these I may disobey my orders

without dishonour. I am not a soldier. Let me tell you a little, then, so that you may not suffer on my account. No harm will come to me when you take me, as you must, to General Stuart. I am here by his own orders, and I was over there," motioning toward the enemy's lines, "with his full knowledge and consent. There. That is all I may tell you."

The strong man turned deathly pale under the shock of the relief that the young woman's words brought to his mind. For a moment Agatha thought that he would fall, but recovering himself, he ejaculated, "Thank God!" and those were the only words he spoke for a space.

He presently ordered the horses brought, and helped Agatha to mount.

"Can you manage to ride a McClellan saddle?" he asked. "There is no other to be had."

"I suppose not," Agatha answered, with returning spirits. "I suppose the quartermaster's department does not issue side-saddles to the mounted artillery for the use of errant damsels whom they capture. But I can do very well on a cavalry saddle."

XVII

At headquarters

AGATHA was well-nigh exhausted by the terrible strain she had endured. She could scarcely sustain herself in the saddle, as she and Baillie set out, her maid riding a-pillion behind her. She would have liked — if she had dared risk it — to keep the silence of extreme weariness during the journey to Stuart's headquarters, two or three miles away, but in fact she talked incessantly, in a hard, constrained voice, limiting the conversation strictly to external matters. She asked her companion about his battery, the number and character of his guns, how many men he might have under his command, the nature of his duties, and many other things, chatter about which served as a substitute for the more personal conversation that she was determined to avoid. She was fencing for position, and her purpose was plain enough to Baillie Pegram, but

at the end of the ride the girl herself was more inscrutably a riddle to him than she had been before. For just as they arrived, and when it was too late for him to say any word in reply, she suddenly turned to him, and said:

"Before we part, Captain Pegram, I want to thank you for all you have done for me, and still more for what you have felt — I mean your wish to save me. I am very grateful, but —"

There she broke off, leaving him to torture himself with almost maddening conjectures as to what should have followed that bewildering "but."

At that moment Stuart, who had heard of the capture and was waiting, came hurriedly from the piazza of his headquarters to greet and welcome the arriving pair. With strong arms he lifted the girl from her saddle and placed her on her feet, as he might have done with an infant child. For he was a giant in strength, and his muscles were as obedient to his will as were the troopers who so eagerly followed him in every fray.

Seeing the girl's bedraggled condition, and understanding how sorely shaken her nerves must

be, he made no reference to the circumstances of her coming, but cheerily said:

"I am doubly fortunate, Miss Agatha, in having you again for a visitor, and in having the ladies of my household with me just now; for God bless these Virginia women," addressing this part of his remark to Captain Pegram, "they are always with us when we need them."

With that he hurried Agatha into the house, and placed her in feminine charge, with orders that she should have food and rest and sleep, and especially that she should not be annoyed by any questionings until such time as she should herself desire to speak with him.

"You will remain with us to dinner, Captain Pegram, if you please. There are matters about which I wish to talk with you."

When the two were left alone, he said:

"Tell me, now, all you know about how Miss Agatha became your prisoner — the details, I mean."

When Baillie had finished the narrative, expressing wonder that the girl had passed unharmed through that hailstorm of canister, Stuart said, simply:

"I'm glad your gun practice was no better."

"So am I," the young man answered.

It was not until late in the afternoon that Stuart was summoned to meet his guest, who was also his prisoner. She had in the meantime divested herself and her maid of their burden, and the precious drug had been carefully packed for shipment under guard to Richmond. She had also slept long and well after her breakfast, and was now as fresh and as full of spirit as if she had known no hardship, and passed through no danger.

Before the dinner hour, Stuart had taken pains to send away all the members of his staff, each upon some errand manufactured for the occasion. At dinner there was no one present but his own family, Agatha, and Captain Baillie Pegram.

Stuart was all eagerness to learn not only the results, but the details of the perilous journey, and to that end he required Agatha to begin at the beginning and relate each day's experience. She did so, explaining the arrangements she had made for her underground railway, and telling him of a plan she had formed to give to that line a number of termini at various points in

Virginia, each under charge of some trusty "Dixie girl," in order that there might be no interruption of the traffic, whatever the future movements of the two armies might be.

"It's the very crookedest railroad you ever heard of, General," she added, when her account of it was finished, "but I expect it to do a considerable traffic. I am to be its general freight agent, and I have impressed all my agents with the fact that the preservation of our secret is of far greater importance than the safe delivery of any one consignment of goods. They will take plenty of time at every step, and not risk discovery for the sake of speed."

"That is excellent. But I wish I had suggested to you to make some arrangement by which you might — "

"O, I did that," she interrupted. "I took a leaf out of your book. Of course, it will often be possible to get little letters through, but letters are very dangerous — at least, when they say anything. So I have taken your signal-words as my model, and laboriously constructed a system by which I can say the most dangerous things

in a letter without seeming to say anything at all."

"By signal-words?"

"Yes, partly, but more in other ways."

"For example?"

"Well, if I send a foolish, chattering girl's note about nothing, and I happen to write it in a 'back hand,' that fact will tell my correspondent what I want to tell her. So if I write in an ordinary hand, that will mean something quite different. In the same way, if I write, 'My dear Mary,' it will signify one thing, while 'Dear Mary' will mean another; I've arranged fourteen different forms of address, each having its own particular meaning. The punctuation will mean something, too, and the way I sign myself, and the colour of my ink, and the occasional slight misspelling of a word — all these and a dozen other things are carefully arranged for, so that I can tell a friend pretty nearly anything I please, while seeming only to tell her the colour of my new gown — if I ever have a new gown again — or anything else of the kind that girls are fond of writing letters about."

"But you and all your correspondents must

have copies of your code for all this. Isn't there great danger that one or another of them may be discovered?"

The girl laughed before answering.

"Even you, General Stuart, must have found out that it is difficult to discover what is in a young woman's mind. This code exists nowhere else in the world. We've all learned it by heart, and can recite it backward or forward or even sideways. No word of it has ever been written down on paper, or ever will be. You gentlemen are fond of saying that we women cannot keep a secret. You shall see how well we keep this."

"O, as to that," answered Stuart, "I never shared any such belief. Why, women keep secrets so well that we never know even what they think of us. Is not that so, Captain Pegram?"

"Yes, and perhaps it is fortunate for us, too, sometimes."

"But I did betray a secret to Captain Pegram this morning," Agatha continued, speaking gravely now. "He seemed so troubled at having to arrest me under the circumstances in which I seemed to have placed myself, that I relieved

his mind by telling him I was acting under your orders, or, at least, with your consent."

"Perhaps you'd like to prefer charges against the captain? I dare say he was very stern and inconsiderate."

Instantly the girl flushed, and speaking with unusual seriousness, she answered:

"I beg to assure you, General Stuart, that Captain Pegram was altogether generous and kind to me — far more so than I had a right to expect. I can never sufficiently thank him."

To Baillie, this speech was inscrutable and bewildering. It might mean one thing, or another — much or little — according to the interpretation put upon the words. It might refer only to Baillie's care for her physical comfort and safety, or, as Baillie scarcely dared believe, it might obliquely include in its intent, an acknowledgment of the passionate declaration of love that he had been betrayed into making. It might be interpreted to mean that the words surprised from his lips were not unwelcome to her who had heard them. She had bidden him forget what he had said, but might it not be that she

herself remembered and was not displeased with the recollection?

He resolved to ask her for the answer to that riddle at the earliest possible moment, but for the present he flushed crimson and kept silent.

Stuart, however, had accomplished his purpose. He had found out, or believed that he had found out, what he wished to know concerning the attitude of these two toward each other, and he was mightily pleased with the discovery. He abruptly changed the course of the conversation.

"When would you like to go to your home, Miss Agatha?"

"I should like to set out early to-morrow, General, if I may — if I am released from arrest."

"O, I shall not release you yet. You are much too dangerous a conspirator for that. I shall send you home under guard, and I have selected Captain Pegram to be your safe-keeper. I shall send him with you, under orders to remain at Willoughby for a week, keeping you under close surveillance. If at the end of that time he finds you sufficiently subdued, he will have orders to put you on parole, and return to his command. As he and you are 'almost strangers,' he will be

a safer judge of the propriety of releasing you than any other officer I could send for that purpose."

The two were sorely embarrassed by this announcement, coming as it did without warning to either. Neither knew what to say, or whether the arrangement was welcome or unwelcome to the other. The sudden announcement of it, at any rate, was very embarrassing to both, and Pegram received it with a feeling of consternation for the moment. In the next instant, he realised the opportunity it would give him to renew the morning's conversation, and to learn definitely what Agatha's attitude toward him was to be after such a declaration as he had made. For whatever else happens, an avowal of that kind, made with such earnestness, never fails to work some change in a true woman's mind and soul. Baillie managed, with some difficulty, to say:

"I will be glad to carry out your orders, General."

Agatha said nothing. What she thought and felt, it would be idle to inquire.

XVIII

A BRUSH AT THE FRONT

A SITUATION which might have become embarrassing, had it been prolonged, was relieved at that moment by the arrival of a courier who had come in hot haste with messages from the front.

The enemy was moving upon Fairfax Court-house in three columns and in strong force. The light of battle came into Stuart's eyes as he received the news, and he issued hurried orders to his staff-officers as one after another they came up at a gallop. To Agatha he said:

"Remain here, you and the other ladies, unless orders come for you to leave. I must borrow Captain Pegram from your service for a time, if I may."

"Gladly!" answered the girl, and her tone sorely puzzled Baillie Pegram. But there was

no time for speculation upon its meaning, for Stuart turned to him and ordered:

"Take your battery down the Vienna road, and act with Fitz Lee or whomever else you find there. Move rapidly, but spare your horses all you can."

Then hurriedly turning to the couriers and staff-officers who stood by their horses, he issued orders with the rapidity of one who recites the alphabet or the multiplication table. Within the space of two minutes he had assigned every brigade and regiment under his command to its post and duty, and had sent to General Johnston at Centreville a request that infantry supports might be moved forward and held within call in case of need. A minute later he was a-gallop for the front.

Baillie had preceded him, and even before the general had reached Fairfax Court-house, Pegram's battery was hurrying down the Vienna road, with the First and Fourth Regiments of Virginia cavalry just in front. It was the work of a very few moments to form these forces and others that were coming up, into a line of battle, facing the enemy, but by the time they were in

position, Stuart himself came up and took command.

"Tell Captain Pegram," he said to a staff-officer, "to advance his battery to the brow of the hill yonder, and open a vigorous fire upon whatever he finds in front. Order Colonel Jones of the First Regiment to take position immediately in rear of the battery, and support it at all hazards."

Within less time than it takes to write the words, Baillie Pegram's guns were hurling shrapnel into the face of the enemy, whose response was menacingly slow and deliberate.

"That looks," said Stuart, presently, to one who rode by his side, "as if they meant business this time. Send orders to the infantry in rear to form a second line, and be ready in case we are beaten back."

It should be explained that during the autumn of 1861 McClellan sent out many expeditions, each wearing the aspect of an advance in force against the Confederate position at Centreville. These movements were in reality intended as threats, and nothing more. The chief purpose of them was to keep the Confederates uneasy,

and at the same time to accustom the Federal volunteers to stand fire and to contemplate battle in earnest as the serious business of the soldier.

These advances were made always with a brave show of infantry, cavalry, and artillery, and with all the seeming of the vanguard of an army intending battle. But after a heavy skirmish the columns were always withdrawn, leaving only picket-lines at the front. McClellan was not yet ready to offer battle. It was during that period that President Lincoln, weary of McClellan's delay and inactivity, sarcastically said that if the general had no use for the army, he (Lincoln) would like to borrow it for awhile.

But this day's movement differed in some respects from those that had gone before. It involved a much heavier force, for one thing, and the proportion of artillery to the other arms was greater. Still more significant was the fact that the commander of the expedition, instead of making the customary dash, threw forward a heavy skirmish-line, holding his main body in reserve, and otherwise conducting himself after the fashion of a general sent to hold the front with as

little fighting as might be, until a much heavier force could be brought up.

It was Stuart's duty, as the commander of the cavalry, to find out as quickly as possible what lay behind the lines that confronted him, in order that he might know and report precisely what and how much the movement meant. To that end he sent for Colonel Jones, of the First Regiment, and when that most unmilitary-looking of hard fighters presented himself in his faded yellow coat, the pot hat which he always wore at that time, and with his peculiar nasal drawl, Stuart gave the order:

"Take your right company and ride to the right around the flank of the enemy's line. Find out what it amounts to. See if there are baggage and ammunition trains in rear, and if they mean business. The whole thing is probably as hollow as a gourd, but it may be otherwise. Go and find out."

In the meantime, Stuart had dismounted a part of his forces, and ordered them with their carbines to form a skirmish-line on foot in front. The rest of his men — three thousand stalwart young cavaliers, mounted upon horses that had

pedigrees behind them—were drawn up in double ranks wherever there was space for a regiment, a company, or a squad of them to stand.

Then came half an hour of waiting. The enemy had thrown additional infantry forward, and the skirmishing grew steadily heavier, as if the Federal skirmish-line were being reinforced from moment to moment.

In fact, that heavy advance-line embraced all there was of the Federal movement, as Colonel Jones discovered, when with a single company of horsemen he gained the enemy's rear. There were no baggage or provision or ammunition trains to indicate a serious purpose of giving battle.

The captain of the company which Colonel Jones had taken with him on this mission of discovery, was a reticent person, but a man of quick wits, ready resource, and a daring that always had a relish of humour in it. When Colonel Jones suggested a return march around the enemy's left flank, the captain asked:

"Why not take a short cut?" and when asked for his meaning, answered:

"It's an egg-shell, that line. The quickest

way of letting Stuart know the fact, it seems to me, would be to break through right here. He won't be long in getting to windward of the situation when he sees us coming."

The suggestion was instantly acted upon, with a startling dramatic result. With a yell that made them seem a regiment of howling demons, the fifty or sixty men charged upon the rear of the line and broke through it. Even before the head of their little column showed itself on the farther side, their yells had made sufficient report of the facts to the alert mind of Jeb Stuart. He instantly led his entire force forward to the charge.

There was a clatter of hoofs, a clangour of sabres, a rattle of small arms, and a roar from Baillie Pegram's guns. Everything was shrouded in an impenetrable cloud of dust and powder-smoke.

The enemy stood fast for a time, resisting obstinately and fairly checking the tremendous onset. It was not until a brigade of infantry and three full batteries had been brought into action that the Federals gave way. Even then, they retreated in orderly fashion, with no suggestion of panic or loss of cohesion.

"George B. McClellan has at last got his army into fighting shape," commented Stuart, when all was over. "He's going to give us trouble from this time forth."

The Federals were in full retreat, but their steadiness did not encourage Stuart to send small forces in pursuit. He contented himself with advancing his line half a mile for purposes of observation, after which, as the night was falling, he ordered a general return of his regiments to their encampments.

When all was over, there were found to be many empty saddles in Stuart's command. Among them was that which Baillie Pegram had ridden during the morning's journey with Agatha Ronald.

XIX

Agatha's resolution

THE reports which came to Stuart from the several commands that evening included one from the senior lieutenant of Baillie Pegram's battery. After reading it, Stuart took Agatha aside, and said:

"I have news which it will not be pleasant for you to hear. Captain Pegram is badly wounded, and in the hands of the enemy."

The girl paled to the lips, but controlled herself, and replied in a voice constrained but steady:

"Tell me about it, General — all of it, please."

"I'll tell you all that is known. Captain Pegram is an unusually energetic officer, with a bad habit of getting himself wounded. His battery to-day was in the extreme advance, but it seems that a little hill just in front of him interfered with the fire of one of his guns, and so he advanced with that piece to the crest of

the mound. At that moment the enemy made a dash at that point, and it became necessary to retire the gun to prevent its capture. Pegram gave orders to that effect, and they were executed. But almost as the orders left his lips, he fell from his horse with a bullet-hole through his body. His men tried to bring him off, but that involved the risk of losing the gun, so he peremptorily ordered them to save the gun and leave him where he lay. The enemy's line swarmed over the little hill, and when our men recovered it, Pegram was nowhere to be found. The enemy had evidently carried him to the rear to care for him as a wounded prisoner."

"Can anything be done?" the girl asked, still with an apparent calm that would have deceived a less sagacious observer than Stuart.

"I could send a flag of truce to-morrow to ask concerning him, but it would be of no use. You see the enemy refuses as yet to recognise our rights as belligerents, and will not communicate with us in proper form. Their answer would come back addressed to me, but carefully lacking all indication of my character as an officer in the Confederate army. Under my orders I could

not receive a communication so addressed. It would be of no use, therefore, to inquire, and in any case we could not secure his exchange, as we have now no exchange cartel in force. I do not see that we can do anything."

The young woman stood silent for a full minute, while Stuart looked at her, full of an admiration for the courage she was manifesting. At last she asked:

"General, will you send to the camp of Captain Pegram's battery, and bid his servant report here to me at once?"

For reply Stuart called Corporal Hagan — the swarthy giant who had charge of his couriers — and ordered him to send a courier on Agatha's mission without delay.

Half an hour later Sam presented himself with eyes red from weeping, and Agatha proceeded at once to business.

"You care a great deal for your master, don't you, Sam?"

"Kyar for Mas' Baillie? Ain't I his nigga? An' ain't he de mastah of Warlock? Kyar for him? Why, Mis' Agatha, I'se ready to lay down

an' die dis heah very minute 'case he's done got hisse'f shot an' captured."

"Then you are willing to take some risks for his sake?"

"Sho' as shootin' I is. Yes, sho'er'n shootin', 'case shootin' ain't always sho'. Jes' you tell me how to do anything for Mas' Baillie, an' then bet all the money you done got, an' put your mortal soul into de bet, dat Sam'll face de very debil hisse'f to carry out yer 'structions."

"I believe you, Sam, and I'm going to trust you. You will go with me to Willoughby tomorrow. We'll start soon in the morning and get there before night. From there I'm going to send you north to find your master. I'll tell you how to do it. When you find him, you are to stay with him and nurse him, no matter where he is. And when he gets well enough, you must find some way of setting him free from the hospital so that he can make his way back to Virginia again."

"But, Mis' Agatha, how's I to —"

"Never mind the details now. I'll tell you about all that when I get my plans ready. I'll tell you everything you must do and how to do

it, so far as I can, and you must depend on your wits for the rest. You're pretty quick, I think."

"Yes'm; anyhow I kin see through a millstone ef there's a hole through it. But, Mis' Agatha, is you sho' 'nuff gwine to tell me how to fin' Mas' Baillie an' take kyar o' him?"

Agatha reassured him, and sent him off to sleep in order to be ready for their early start in the morning. Then she joined Stuart and asked him:

"Did you pick up any prisoners near the point where Captain Pegram fell?"

"I really don't know. Why?"

"Why, if you did you'd know to what command they belonged, and that would help me."

"Help you? Why, what are you planning?"

"To find Captain Pegram."

"But how?"

"Through my agents, — and Sam, his body-servant."

"O, I see. Your underground railroad is to have a passenger traffic. I'll find out what you wish to know. And if you'd like I'll have Sam passed through our lines, after which he can pretend to be a runaway."

"I thought of that," Agatha answered, "but it will not do. I must send him through my friends. You see in Maryland he'll require a slave's pass from a master, and my friends will be his masters, one after another. Besides, they will help me find out in what hospital Captain Pegram is. I've thought it all out. I must first prepare my friends for Sam's coming. With your permission I'll take him with me to Willoughby to-morrow."

"You are a wonderful woman!"

That is all that Stuart said, but it sufficiently suggested the admiration he felt for her courage, her resourcefulness, and her womanly devotion. Bidding her call upon him for any assistance she might need in carrying out her plans, he dismissed her for the night, ordering her to go to sleep precisely as he might have ordered a soldier to go to his tent. But Agatha did not obey as the soldier would have done. She went to bed, indeed, but she could not sleep. Her nerves were all a-quiver as the result of the trying experiences to which she had been subjected, until now her excited brain simply would not sink into quietude. She lay hour after hour staring into the darkness,

thinking, thinking, thinking. She remembered the words that suffering on her account had wrung from Baillie Pegram that morning at the bivouac, and she bitterly reproached herself for having given him no worthier answer than a command to forget what he had said. She knew now with what measure of devotion this man loved her, and she knew something else, too, as she lay there in the darkness face to face with her own soul. She knew now that she loved Baillie Pegram with all that was best in her proud and passionate nature. That truth confronted her. It was "naked and not ashamed." Her conscience scourged her for what she regarded as her heartlessness and frivolity in putting aside his declaration of love with the false pretence that it found no response in her own soul.

"I might at least have thanked him," she thought. "I might at least have said to him 'there is no longer war between me and thee.' And now he lies dead perhaps, or on a bed of suffering, — a wounded prisoner in the hands of the enemy. All that I can now do is to search him out and send Sam to nurse and comfort him." Then a new thought came to her. "That is *not*

all that I can do. Shame upon me for thinking so, even for a moment. I can go to him myself, and I will, if God lets him live long enough. I'll take Sam with me. He can be very helpful in the search, with his sharp wits and the freedom from suspicion which his black face will secure him."

The dawn was breaking now, and a score of bugles were musically sounding the reveille in the camps round about. Agatha rose quickly, and without summoning her weary maid, plunged her face into a basin of cold water half a dozen times. Then seeing in her little mirror how hollow-eyed and haggard she was, she wetted a towel and flagellated herself with it till the colour came back and her nerves lost their tremulousness.

So great a transformation did this treatment work, that Stuart complimented her upon her freshness of face when she appeared at the breakfast-table. He had meanwhile secured for her definite information as to the Federal command that had made Pegram prisoner. He had also managed in some way to secure a side-saddle for her to ride upon, and a squad of cavalrymen,

under command of a sergeant, was waiting outside to be her escort on her journey.

"Thank you, General, for giving me so good a mount," she said, glancing with a practised eye at the lean but powerful animal provided for her use."

"You should have a better one, if a better were to be had. You deserve it. By the way, you need not send the horse back by the escort. He will not be needed here, for a time at least."

Agatha looked at him, and then at the animal again, this time recognising it as the one that Baillie Pegram had ridden by her side twenty-four hours before.

"He belongs to Captain Pegram, I believe," she answered.

"Yes, his second horse, and he is specially careful of him."

"I'll see that the animal is well cared for," answered the girl, "until —"

She did not finish the sentence, and Stuart turned away, pretending not to see the tears that stood beneath her eyelids.

XX

Two home-comings

NEWS of Agatha's safe return to Virginia had been sent to Colonel Archer by a courier, on the morning of her arrival at Stuart's headquarters, and the octogenarian promenaded up and down the porch all the next day, during her homeward journey.

He had greatly grieved to have his "ladybird" undertake her late perilous enterprise at all. But with him at least Agatha was accustomed to have her way, and moreover the spirit of the old soldier was strong within him still, so that he was intensely in sympathy with Agatha's courageous purpose to render such service as a woman might to the cause that both had at heart.

But Agatha had a harder task before her now. Remembering the heart-broken tone in which he had bidden her good-bye on the former occasion, and easily imagining the suffering he must have

endured during her absence, both from loneliness and from apprehension for her safety, she thought with something like terror of her new necessity of leaving him again, almost in the very hour of his joy at her return. For it was her resolute purpose to set out again within a very few days, — as soon, indeed, as she could feel confidence that her preliminary letters would reach their destination before her own arrival there.

There were other matters that troubled her, too. She must tell her Chummie the reason for her second journey, and that would be a distressing thing for her to do. She must tell him frankly — for she would never in the least trifle with truth, especially in dealing with him — that she had learned to love Baillie Pegram, and that she had in effect put it out of possibility that Baillie Pegram should ever ask for knowledge of that fact.

To a woman of her sensitively proud nature, such a confession, even to her grandfather, seemed almost shameful. She shrank from the very thought of it, and flushed crimson every time it came to her mind during that long day's ride.

Yet not for one moment did she falter in her determination to undergo the ordeal. Not for one moment did she entertain a thought of evading the painful confession, or in any way disguising the truth. So much was due to her grandfather, and never in her life had she cheated him of his dues as Chummie. It was due to herself also. To shrink from a duty because of its painfulness would be cowardice, and there was no touch or trace of that most detestable weakness in her soul.

"Anyhow," she resolved, "I'll let him have one whole day of joy before I grieve him with the news that I must go away again. And in telling him of my first journey I'll say as little as I can about the dangers encountered and the hardships endured; I'll make as much of a frolic of it as I can in the telling. Surely there will be no untruthfulness in that."

That day's journey was a long one, but the start was early, and Baillie Pegram's horse was a willing one, as that energetic young man's horses were apt to be, while as for the troopers of the escort, they and their horses were accustomed to follow at any pace their leader might

sc . It was barely three o'clock in the afternoon, therefore, when the cavalcade arrived at Willoughby, and Agatha threw herself into the old gentleman's arms.

"Oh, Agatha!"

"Oh, Chummie!"

That at first was all that the two could say. When Colonel Archer found voice he greeted the troopers and bade them leave their horses to the care of his servants. For the men were of that class, socially, to which Colonel Archer belonged, and there was no thought at that time in Virginia of treating a gentleman otherwise than as a gentleman, merely because he happened to be a private soldier.

"You will be my guests for the night," the host said, quite as if that settled the matter. But the sergeant had orders which he must obey, — orders which Stuart, with his unfailing foresight, had probably given, to make sure that the presence of his men at Willoughby overnight might not spoil an occasion of tender affection.

"Thank you very cordially, Colonel Archer," answered the sergeant; "but we are under orders to move on toward Loudoun County to-night.

We are permitted to rest the horses for three hours only. After that we must march about a dozen miles before sleeping, so that we may complete a little scouting expedition into Loudoun tomorrow. Our orders on that point are peremptory."

"Well, Ladybird, we'll have the gentlemen to dinner at any rate. As soon as I heard of your coming I went out with my gun, and brought back two big wild turkeys, as fat as butter. I thought you might come under escort, so I've had them put both the birds on the spit. I'll wager you gentlemen haven't seen a wild turkey this fall."

So he ran on with his hospitable greetings, managing in his joyous nervousness to upset two of the glasses which he had ordered a servant to bring with the decanters, for the troopers' refreshment. Agatha managed presently to get a word with him aside.

"It is three o'clock, Chummie — an hour before dinner. I'll have time enough to boil myself a little. Think of it, Chummie, I haven't had a hot bath for a whole week!" Then turning to

her escort she excused herself until the dinner-hour.

This was an unhappy circumstance, as Agatha learned when she came down, fresh-faced, to the dinner. For, left alone with the troopers, the old gentleman naturally asked them concerning the details of her coming into Stuart's lines, and as the story of her dash through the canister fire was echoing throughout the army, the young fellows grew enthusiastic in their minute descriptions of her peril and her heroism. When Agatha reappeared, therefore, the old gentleman was all a-tremble. He met her at the foot of the stairway, and a little scene followed, which told the girl not only that he knew all that had been most harrowing in her experiences, but that the knowledge of it would make her coming absence cruelly hard for him to bear.

At dinner he found himself too tremulous to carve, and, for the first time in his life, he relinquished that most hospitable of all a host's offices to the younger men.

"Never mind, Ladybird," he said, cheerily, as he saw how greatly troubled she was, "it will pass presently, and you shall find me quite myself

again in the morning. We're going after the birds, you know, you and I. I haven't allowed a partridge to be killed on the plantation this fall, so that you might be sure of a good day's sport with Chummie."

Thus it came about that as the old man and the young woman sat in the firelight that evening, after the troopers were gone, Agatha changed her purpose and told him of Baillie Pegram. Delicately, but with perfect candour, she told the whole of the truth.

"I learned to like him very much while I was in Richmond last Christmas, and I was not to blame for that, was I, Chummie? He was so kind to me, so good in a thousand little ways, so gentle in all his strength that he reminded me of you, more than anybody else ever did. I used often to think that he was very much the sort of man you must have been when you were in your twenties. There was no reason, that I knew of, why I should not like him. He was a gentleman, the representative of one of the best families in the State, a man of the highest character, well-educated, travelled, intellectual, and of charming manners. He did more than anybody

else — or everybody else for that matter — to make the time pass pleasantly for me. You see how it was, don't you, Chummie?"

The old gentleman nodded his head with a smile, and answered:

"I see how it was, Ladybird. Go on. Tell me all about it."

"Then one day there came a letter from The Oaks. It wasn't just a scolding letter. It was something much worse than that. For if my aunts had scolded me, I shouldn't have stood it."

"What would you have done, Ladybird?" asked the grandfather, with a look of pleased and loving pride upon his countenance.

"I should have come back to Willoughby and you."

"And right welcome you would have been. But go on. What did the old cats — psha! I didn't mean that; I thought I heard a cat yowling as I spoke — what did the good ladies of The Oaks say to you?"

"O, they wrote very kindly and sorrowfully. They were shocked to know that I had permitted something like intimacy to grow up between myself and a young man without consulting them

as to the proprieties of the situation. But how could I have done that, Chummie? You see I didn't sit down and say, 'I'm going to be intimate with this young man if my aunts approve.' The friendship just grew, quite naturally, like the grass on a lawn. I didn't think about it at all, and I don't see why I should. I met Mr. Pegram in all the best houses; everybody was fond of him, and everybody spoke of him in the highest terms. Why should I think —"

"You shouldn't, Ladybird. I should have been ashamed of you if you had. Only a vain or morbidly self-conscious girl would have thought in such a case. And only — there goes that confounded cat again — only elderly gentlewomen of secluded lives and a badly perverted sense of propriety would ever have thought of such a thing. But continue, my child. I suppose they told you about that idiotic old quarrel —"

"Yes, Chummie—they told me and they didn't tell me. They never would say what it was all about, or how much there was in it. Indeed, they told me I was guilty of a great irreverence in even asking concerning it. They said it should be quite enough for a well-ordered young woman

to know that these people were my father's enemies. As Mr. Baillie Pegram never knew my father, I couldn't understand why he and I should be enemies, but when I said something like that, I saw that the aunties were terribly shocked. I suppose I'm not a 'well-ordered' young lady, Chummie."

"No! Thank God you're not. You are just a sweet, wholesome, lovable girl — and that is very different from what those old — ladies call a 'well-ordered' young woman."

"Well, anyhow," the girl resumed, "I obeyed my instructions. I wrote to Mr. Pegram, telling him there could be no friendship between him and me, and do you know, Chummie, they blamed me more for that than for all the rest. They said it was 'unladylike' and a lot more things, for me to write to him at all. But I never could find out what they thought I ought to have done. I couldn't break off the acquaintance without telling him I must do so, could I?"

"*You* couldn't, and I'm glad you couldn't. A 'well-ordered' young lady would have done it easily. She would have told a lot of lies about not being at home when he called, or having a

headache when he wanted to see her. You couldn't do that because you are honest and truthful, and that's the best thing about you, except your love for your old Chummie, and even that wouldn't be of much account if I couldn't trust its truth and sincerity. Go on, child. I didn't mean to interrupt."

"O, but you must interrupt. That's the only way I know what you're thinking. Well, I went to The Oaks sometime later, and while there I went out one morning for a ride by myself. My poor horse broke his leg, as I told you in a letter, and Mr. Baillie Pegram happened along, and was very kind in helping me out of my trouble. He insisted that I should ride his mare home. I tried all I could to refuse, but he showed me that I simply could not help myself, and so I took the mare, — the same one that was killed under him at Manassas. That time the aunties did actually scold me, or pretty nearly that. So I rebelled, and made up my mind to come back to you at once. Mr. Pegram dined at The Oaks on the day before I started, and he and I had a long talk, but of course it could not change the situation. That was the last I saw of him until

the day before the battle of Manassas, when he took a red feather out of my hat and wore it in the battle. He was terribly wounded in the fight, but he sent the feather back to me as he had promised to do. I had quoted to him or let him quote to me the Indian's defiance, 'There is war between me and thee.' It was after that that he insisted upon taking the feather and wearing it through the battle."

The girl paused, but her grandfather said nothing for a whole minute. Perhaps he felt that she needed the pause before speaking further. At last he said, very low and gently:

"Tell me about yesterday morning."

She did so, sparing herself at no point. She told of Baillie's outburst, and of the declaration of his love. She told, too, of her chilling answer, and her perversity in so managing the conversation as to prevent a recurrence to the subject. Finally she broke down, saying with streaming eyes:

"Oh, Chummie! I have ruined his life — and my own!"

"I don't know so well about that. He may recover, you know."

"Yes, I know. But what then?" At that she laid her head upon the old man's breast and let herself become a little child again, in an abandonment of grief. And with a childlike confidence and candour she said at last:

"Oh, Chummie! Don't you understand? He can never know. He will always think of me as hard and cold and unresponsive. After what I said to him yesterday morning, he cannot again tell me — why, Chummie, it was as bad as if I had slapped him in the face!"

The old man caressed her till her agitation subsided. Then, speaking in a tone of wisdom which irresistibly carried conviction with it, he said:

"You are wholly wrong, Agatha. Baillie Pegram is much too brave and true, and much too generous a man to let this matter rest where it is. If he recovers, as I pray God he may, be very sure he will come to you again and tell you calmly what he blurted out without meaning to do so, under stress of a trying situation. You must go to sleep now, little girl. You are very weary and greatly overwrought. And we must be up with the sun to-morrow on account of the

birds. Good night, dear. You must never leave me again while I live."

There was unsteadiness in his step, as he gallantly ushered her through the doorway, and as he returned to the room to extinguish the solitary lamp. Then a heaviness came over him, and he sat down again in his easy chair before the fire. The logs had ceased to blaze and crackle now, but the old man sat still. The logs fell into a mass of glowing coals after a time, and slowly the coals ceased to glow. One by one they went out. Still he did not move.

There were only ashes in the great fireplace when the morning came and Agatha found her Chummie still sitting there where the fire of his life had so gently gone out.

XXI

At parting

NEWS of Colonel Archer's death ran rapidly through a State of which he had been one of the foremost citizens, by reason alike of his public services and his private virtues. It quickly reached Stuart's ears, and he promptly sent a courier with a letter of sympathy and friendship, at the end of which he wrote:

"Now, my dear Miss Agatha, I crave a favour at your hands. Your grandfather was a soldier greatly distinguished in two wars. He should have a soldier's burial, and with your permission, which I take for granted, I am ordering a company of dragoons and a battery now stationed at Warrenton and under my command, to move at once to Willoughby, and there pay the last honours to the veteran."

Heart-broken as she was, Agatha met calamity with a fortitude which astonished even herself.

She was still scarcely more than a girl, but the blood of a soldier filled her veins, — a soldier who had never flinched from danger or murmured under suffering. "I too will neither flinch nor murmur," she said to herself. "Chummie would like it best to see me brave and resolute, if he could know — and perhaps he does know. I will bear myself as he would like me to."

And she kept that vow to the letter. The tears would mount to her eyelids now and then in spite of her and trickle down her cheeks; but they were silent tears, accompanied by no moanings that were audible; they were the tears of heart-break, not the tears of weakness and self-pity. They were hidden for the most part from human view, and resolutely restrained in the presence of others. And when any of those who thronged about her for her consolation caught momentary sight of them, the effect was like that produced when a strong man weeps.

When the soldiers came she directed an attentive ministry to their comfort, and after the last salutes to the dead had been fired over the grave, she turned to Captain Marshall Pollard, whose

battery it was that had paid that tribute of honour, and asked in a steady voice:

"Can you arrange to stay at Willoughby overnight? I have need to talk with you of matters of some importance. It will be very kind and good of you, if you can manage it."

After a moment's reflection, Marshall answered:

"I can stay till midnight, and that will give us time for our talk. I must be at Warrenton at reveille in the morning, but my horse will easily make the distance if I start by one o'clock."

Then he spoke a few words in a low tone to his lieutenant, who took command and marched the battery away, with all heads bared till they had passed out of the grounds.

"Let us not talk of my grandfather, please," said the girl, as the two entered the drawing-room. "Not that I shrink from that," she quickly added. "It can never be painful to me to speak of him. But it might distress you. You knew him and loved him long ago, before — before you and I quarrelled."

She did not shrink from this reference to the past, or try in any way to disguise the truth of

it. Her mind was full of the dear dead man's last words spoken in praise of her courage and truthfulness, and she was more resolute than ever to live up to the character he had approved so earnestly and with so much of loving admiration.

"I think we did not quarrel," the young captain responded; "you did not, at any rate. I misjudged you cruelly, and in my anger I falsely accused you in my heart. Believe me, Agatha," — he had called her so in the old days, and the name came easily to his lips now, — "believe me when I say that I have outlived all that bitterness. Let us be true, loyal friends hereafter, friends who know and trust each other, friends who do not misunderstand."

The girl held out her hand, in response, and made no effort to hide the tears with which she welcomed this healing of the old wounds.

The young man, too, rejoiced in a reconciliation which laid his old love for this woman for ever to rest and planted flowers of friendship upon its grave. He was astonished at his own condition of mind and heart. He learned now the truth that his mad love for Agatha had become completely a thing of the past, and that the bitterness

which had at first succeeded it was utterly gone. He could think of her henceforth with a tender affection that had no trace of passion in it. The dead past had buried its dead, and the grass grew green above it.

At that moment dinner was announced, for Agatha had decreed that life at Willoughby should at once resume its accustomed order. "Chummie would like it so," she thought. So the two friends passed through the hall to the dining-room hand in hand, just as they had so often done in the old days before passion had come to disturb their lives.

Marshall had now one supreme desire with respect to Agatha, — a great yearning to comfort her and help her as a brother might. He told her so, when they returned to the drawing-room after dinner, to sit before the great fire of hickory logs during all the remaining hours of Marshall's stay.

"Tell me now," he said, "of your plans, that I may share in them and help you carry them out perhaps. What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to find Baillie if I can, and nurse him back to health — if it is not too late."

"But he is in the hands of the enemy, you know."

"Yes, I know. That makes it more difficult, but we must not shrink from difficulties. I shall start north to-morrow."

"But how? — Tell me about it, please."

She explained her plans, telling him of the arrangements she had made for bringing medicines through the blockade, transmitting letters, and finding friends at every step in case of need. Then she added:

"I'm going to take Sam with me this time. He is devoted to his master, and his sagacity is extraordinary. I shall depend upon him to help me find where Baillie is, and to do whatever there is to do for him."

"Will you let me have writing materials?" the young man abruptly asked.

Without asking for an explanation, she brought her lap desk, and with the awkwardness which a man always manifests in attempting to use that peculiarly feminine device, he managed to fill two or three sheets. When he had done, he handed the papers to her, saying:

"I can really help, I think. You will need

money for your expenses. You must have it in sufficient supply to meet all emergencies, so that you may never be delayed or baffled in any purpose for want of it. And it may easily happen that you shall need a considerable sum at once. Money is the pass-key to many difficult doors. It so happens that I have a very considerable sum invested in railroad and other securities, in the hands of a very close friend of mine in New York. I have written to him to sell out the whole of them and place the proceeds at your disposal in any banks that may be most convenient to you."

"But, Marshall, you are impoverishing yourself —"

"In the which case," he responded, with his gentle, half-mocking smile, "I should be doing no more than all the rest of us Virginians are doing in this struggle. But I am doing nothing of the kind. I have a plantation, you know, and absolutely nobody dependent upon me. If I survive the war I shall have some land, at any rate, out of which to dig a living. These investments of mine at the North were made long before the war, and I should have sold them out

at the beginning of the trouble if I hadn't been too lazy to attend to my affairs. I'm glad now that I was lazy. It enables me to help the two best friends I ever had in this rather lonely world, — Baillie Pegram and you. A man may do as he likes with his own, you know, and this is precisely what I like to do with my securities. Fortunately my friend who has them in charge is a blue-blooded Virginian, who would be fighting with us out there on the lines, if he were not a helpless cripple, fit for nothing, as he wrote to me when the trouble came, but to manage his banking-house. But how are you to get these papers through with you, without risk of discovery?"

"I'll make Sam carry them," she responded. "Nobody will ever think of searching him, particularly as his connection with my affairs will be known to nobody except my friends and co-conspirators."

"What a strategist you are, Agatha! What a general you would have made if you'd happened to be a man!" exclaimed the young man in admiration.

"No," she answered, hesitating for a moment,

and then resolutely going on to speak truthfully the thought that was in her. "No, Marshall, for then I should not have had the impulse that teaches me now what to do. Tell me now, about the war. Shall I find Willoughby occupied as a Federal general's headquarters when I get back to Virginia?"

"I don't know. I cannot even guess what the officials at Richmond mean. I only know we have thrown away an opportunity that will never come back to us. The army was full of enthusiasm after Manassas — it is discouraged and depressed now. Then it was strong with the hope and confidence that are born of victory; now it sits there wondering when the enemy will be ready for it to fight again. It was fit for any enterprise then, and the enemy was utterly unfit to resist anything it might have undertaken. But it was not permitted to undertake anything. It was made to lie still, like a pointer in a turkey blind, quivering with eagerness to be up and doing, but restrained by the paralysis of misdirected authority. While we have been doing nothing, the Federal enemy has been swollen to more than twice our numbers. More important

still, it has been fashioned by McClellan's skilled hand into as fine a fighting-machine as any general need wish for his tool. The officers have been instructed in their profession, and the men have been taught their trade. Their organisation is perfect, their discipline is almost as good as that of regulars, and their confidence in themselves and their commanders is daily and hourly increasing. Our men have abundant confidence in themselves, but none at all in generals who throw away their opportunities or in a government that touches nothing without paralysing it. Moreover, the Federal army has supply departments behind it that could not be bettered, while ours seem wholly imbecile and incapable. It should have been obvious to every intelligent man at the outset, that with our vastly inferior material resources, our best chance of winning in this war was by bringing to bear from the first all we could of dash and ceaseless activity. We should have taken the aggressive at once and all the time, knowing that every day of delay must strengthen the enemy and weaken us. Instead of that, after winning a great battle in such fashion as well-nigh to destroy for a time the enemy's

capacity of resistance, we have taken up a defensive attitude and let the precious opportunity slip from our grasp. It will never return. I do not say that we shall be beaten in the end; I say only that our task is immeasurably more difficult now than it was three months ago, and it is growing more and more difficult every day."

"You are discouraged then?"

"No. I am only depressed. As for courage, we must all of us keep that up to the end. We must be brave to endure as well as to fight, — if we are ever graciously permitted to fight again. But I did not mean to talk of these things. I am only a battery captain. I have no business to think. But unfortunately our army is largely composed of men who can't help thinking. Tell me now, for I must ride presently, is there anything that I can do for you — any way in which I can help you?"

"You will be helping me all the time, just by letting me feel that the old boy and girl friendship is mine again. That is more precious to me than you can imagine. Good-bye, now. Your horse is at the door. Thank you for all, and God bless you."

XXII

Sam as a strategist

AGATHA'S second progress northward was far more difficult of accomplishment than the first had been. Under McClellan's skilled vigilance the armed mob which he found "cowering on the Potomac" in August, had been converted into an army, drilled, disciplined, and familiar with every detail of that military art which it was called upon to practise. The lines west of Washington were far more rigidly drawn and more fully manned than before, and the officers and men who held them exercised a vigilance that had not been thought of a few months earlier.

And this was not the only difficulty that Agatha encountered in her effort to reach Baltimore. A passport system had been inaugurated at the North, under operation of which those who would travel, and especially those who travelled

toward Baltimore, — a city whose loyalty to the Union lay under grave suspicion, — must give a satisfactory account of themselves in order to secure the necessary papers. War had begun to bring the country under that despotism which military force always and everywhere regards as the necessary condition of its effectiveness.

It was a strange spectacle that the country presented during that four years of fratricidal strife. A great, free people, the freest on earth, fell to fighting, one part with another part. Each side was battling, as each side sincerely believed, for the cause of liberty; each was unsparingly spending its blood and treasure in order, in Mr. Lincoln's phrase, that "government of the people, by the people, and for the people might not perish from the earth." Yet on both sides a military rule as rigorous as that of Russia laid its iron hand upon the people, and the people submitted themselves to its exactions almost without a murmur. Arbitrary, inquisitorial, intolerant, this military despotism wrought its will both at the North and at the South, overriding laws and disregarding constitutions, making a mockery of chartered rights, and restraining personal liberty

in ways that would have caused instant and universal revolt, had such things been attempted by civil authority.

The military arm is a servant which is apt to make itself the unrelenting master of those who invoke its assistance.

Agatha encountered this difficulty while yet inside the Confederate lines. She was not permitted to pass in any northward direction upon any pretence. The authorities at one place under Confederate control forbade her to go to another place under like control. She appealed to Stuart in this emergency, and although his authority did not extend into the Shenandoah Valley, he made such representations to the commandants in that quarter as were sufficient for her purposes.

To get within the Federal lines was a still more perplexing problem. One device after another proved ineffectual, and the girl was almost in despair. She appealed at last to the general in command of the cavalry in that region, — one of those to whom Stuart had written in her behalf, — and he promptly responded:

"At precisely what point have you friends in coöperation with you?"

She named a little town within the Federal line where lived some of her nearest friends.

"I can manage that," he said. "The point is an insignificant one ten miles within their lines. There are pretty certainly no troops there, and the picket-lines in front are not very strong, as nothing could be more improbable than the raid I shall make in that direction. You can ride, of course."

"Of course."

"Very well. I'll take a strong force, make a dash through the picket-lines, gallop into the town, and make a foray through the region round about. You will follow my column as closely as you can without placing yourself under fire, and when we reach the town, settle yourself with your friends there, turning your horse loose lest he attract attention. You'd better do that just before we reach the town, and walk the rest of the way. Can you wear a walking-skirt under your riding-habit, and slip off the outer — you see I'm a bachelor, Miss Ronald, and don't understand such things."

"You may safely leave all that to my superior feminine sagacity. When shall we start?"

"Whenever you wish. Only we'd better march in the afternoon and reach the town after nightfall. The nights are very dark now, and you will perhaps be able to escape observation in the town. Let me see," looking at his watch, "it's now half past one. We could do the thing this afternoon, if you were ready."

"I can be ready in fifteen minutes," she replied.

"You're very prompt," the officer said, with a suggestion of admiration in his voice.

"O, I'm half-soldier, you know. General Stuart approves me."

"Very well, then. We'll march in half an hour."

The operation was a very simple one, in its military part, at least. The expedition was composed of a force much too strong for resistance by the handful of men available for immediate use on the enemy's part. In the guise of a foraging party it easily dispersed the picket-lines and pushed forward rapidly, taking the little town in its course, but making no halt there. It scoured the country round about, and as soon as Federal

forces began to gather for its destruction, it retreated by quite a different route from that by which it had advanced.

It was nine o'clock in the evening when Agatha slipped off her horse in the little Maryland town and left it in charge of a trooper. A five-minutes' walk brought her to the house of her friends, where she was safe.

With her walked her negro maid, who had ridden behind her. That maid's name was Sam, and he quickly divested himself of the feminine outer garments which he had worn over his own clothes. This device had been of Sam's own invention, for that worthy, under stress of circumstances, was rapidly developing into something like genius that gift of diplomacy which he had before employed in discouraging his mammy's efforts to make him her assistant in the kitchen. Sam was a consummate liar whenever lying seemed to him to be necessary or even useful. In the service of his master he had no hesitation in saying, or indeed in doing, anything that might be convenient, and during her long stay north of the Potomac Agatha was far more deeply indebted to Sam's unscrupulousness than she knew.

For when he found that his mistress had conscientious objections to his methods, he simply forbore to mention them to her, and carried out his plans on his own responsibility. Long afterward, in relating the experiences of this time to his black companions at Warlock, he made it an interesting feature of his discourse to keep reminding his hearers that, "Mis' Agatha's so dam' hones' dat she wouldn't tell a lie *even to a Yankee.*"

This declaration never failed to open the eyes of the auditors in wonder, and to bring from their lips the half-incredulous response:

"Well, I 'clar to gracious!"

It was Sam who devised and suggested the next step in the present journey. Agatha's arrival at the house, under cover of a very dark night, had been unobserved by any one outside the household, but it was obvious that her remaining there would involve grave danger of discovery. Her presence could not be concealed from the servants of the household, and however loyal these might be to their mistress and her three daughters, who constituted the family, they would very certainly talk, the more especially, if

any efforts were made to keep the visitor in hiding in the house. In a town so small — it was only a village, in fact — gossip has quick wings, and there were sure to be some persons there who would promptly report to the military that a young woman from beyond the lines was in hiding in the town.

The whole matter was discussed in family conclave during the night of Agatha's coming, and fortunately Sam was present, for the reason that it was specially necessary to conceal from the household servants the interesting fact that the "maid" who had accompanied a young lady to the place was in truth a stalwart negro boy. He remained in the room, therefore, from which all the servants were rigidly excluded, and thus became familiar with every detail of the puzzling situation. After ingenuity had been fairly exhausted in devising plans only to reject them one after another as impracticable, Sam, whose modesty had never amounted to shyness, boldly broke into the conversation.

"As I figgers it out, Mis' Agatha," he said, "de case is puffec'ly clar. We cawn't stay heah, 'thout a-gittin' tuk up. We cawn't go back South

'thout a-gittin' tuk up an' maybe gittin' hung in de bargain. So we mus' jes' go on Norf, now, immediately, at once."

"But we can't, Sam. You don't understand. We can't travel without passports."

"Couldn't de ladies git a skyar into 'em, an' tell de Yankees dey jes' cawn't an' won't stay any longer in a town whar de rebels is a-comin' gallopin' through de streets, a-yellin' an' a-shootin' an' a-kickin' up de ole Harry? Wouldn't de Yankees give 'em passpo'ts to de Norf den? Wouldn't dey think it natch'rel dat a houseful o' jes' ladies what's got no men-folks to pertect 'em, would be skyar'd out o' der seven senses after sich a performance as dis heah?"

"But, Sam," interposed his mistress, "that wouldn't do me any good or you either. If anybody asked for passports for you and me, the officers would ask who we are and where we came from, and all about it."

"Don't ax 'em fer no passpo't fer you. Jes' let de other ladies ax fer passpo'ts fer demselves, an' a nigga boy to drive de carriage. I'll be de nigga boy. Den one o' de young ladies mout git over her skyar an' jes' stay at home, quiet

like, an' let you take her place in de carriage. De young lady wouldn't have to go roun' tellin' folks she's done git over her skyar an' stayed at home. Nobody'd know nuffin' about her bein' heah fer a week, an' by dat time de Yankees would 'a' done fergitten how many folks went away in de carriage."

After some discussion it was agreed that Sam's plan, in its general outline at least, was feasible, and as there was no alternative way out, it was finally decided to adopt the scheme.

"You mus' do it right away den," suggested Sam, "while de skyar is on to folks. Ef you wait, de Yankees'll fin' out de trigger o' de trap, sho'. An' after awhile, all de ladies 'ceptin' you, Mis' Agatha, can git over de skyar an' come home agin."

Sam's plan was aided in its execution by the fact that several other families in the town were genuinely scared by the Confederate raid, and, as soon as the Federal posts were reëstablished, asked for passports under which they might send their women and children to less exposed points. When Agatha's hostess made a like application for herself and daughters, with their negro,

"Sam, aged eighteen, five feet seven inches high," and all the rest of the description, no difficulty was encountered in securing the desired papers.

In order that Agatha might go as far northward as possible without having to renew her passport, it was decided that their destination should be at a point well beyond the Pennsylvania border. Agatha had no friends there, and she knew no one of Southern sympathies in the town selected. But thanks to Marshall Pollard, she had command of money in plenty, or would have, as soon as she could send the papers he had given her to New York. It was arranged, therefore, that the little party, in the character of refugees, should take quarters at a hotel until such time as Agatha could renew her journey without her companions. In the meantime, Agatha, by means of correspondence with her friends in Baltimore and Washington, could prosecute her inquiries as to Baillie Pegram's condition and whereabouts.

XXIII

A NEGOTIATION

AGATHA did not remain long in the little Pennsylvania town. She found its people to be positively peppery in their Union sentiments, and she soon realised that she could make no inquiries from that point without attracting dangerous attention to herself. She saw, too, that the little city was not large enough for easy concealment. She could not there lose herself in the crowd and pass unobserved whithersoever she pleased. She promptly decided that her best course would be to go on to New York, but even that could not be undertaken with safety for a time. She must remain where she was for two or three weeks — long enough for her presence there to lose its character as a novelty.

Sam, who enjoyed her confidence to the full, suggested that she should feign ill-health, and

leave the place under pretence of seeking a residence better suited to her constitution. That was not the way in which Sam expressed his thought, of course, but he made himself clearly understood by saying:

"Tell you what 'tis, Mis' Agatha, you'se jes' got to git powerful sick an' say you cawn't live in no sich a pesky town as dis here one. Den you kin pack up yer things, ef you've got any, an' move on."

Agatha laughed, and answered:

"Why, Sam, I don't know how to be ill. I never had a headache in my life, and I couldn't look like an invalid if I tried. No, Sam, we must just wait here for a time."

"Why, Mis' Agatha, it's de easiest thing in de world to make out as how you'se sick when you ain't. I'se done it hundreds of times, when mammy wanted me to wuk in de kitchen an' I wanted to go a-fishin'. All you got to do is to look solemncholy-like, an' say you'se got a pain in yo' haid an' a powerful misery in yo' back, an' cole chills a-creepin' all over you. Tell you what, it's as easy as nuffin' at all."

Agatha laughed again, but put Sam's plan

aside without further discussion, whereat that budding strategist went away sorrowful, muttering to himself:

"I done heah folks say as how 'white man's mighty onsartain,' but Mis' Agatha's a heap wuss'n even a white man, leastwise 'bout some things."

A week later, Sam presented another plan, which he had wrought out in his mind at cost of not a little gray brain matter.

"Mis' Agatha," he asked, "is you got any frien's in New York what you kin trus' to do what you axes 'em to do?"

"Yes, Sam. There's one gentleman there who will do anything I ask him to do. He's the one to whom I sent the papers that I made you carry till we got here."

"Den you kin write to him?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, now, I'se got a plan dat'll wuk as easy — as easy as playin' of de banjo. You jes' write to dat gentleman, an' git him to sen' you a telemagraph, sayin' as how somebody's a-dyin' over there, somebody yo'se powerful fond of, an' so you mus' come quick."

This time Sam's suggestion commended itself to his mistress's mind, and soon afterward there came a telegram to her, saying:

"Come quick if you want to see Eliza alive."

She hurriedly packed the few belongings which she had purchased in the Pennsylvania town, bade her friends good-bye, and before noon of the next day, was safely hidden in the little lodging which Marshall Pollard's friend had secured for her in New York. In the great city she might go and come and do as she pleased without fear of observation, and without the least danger of attracting attention to herself. There is no solitude so secure as that of a thronged city, where men are too completely self-centred to concern themselves with the affairs of their neighbours.

Agatha's first inquiries concerning Baillie's whereabouts were directed toward the military prisons and prison-camps, but in none of them could she find a trace of the master of Warlock. When she had completely exhausted this field of inquiry, a great fear came upon her, that the man she sought was dead. The presumption was strong that he had died of his wound before he could be sent to any of the prisons provided for

captured Confederates. A less resolute person would have accepted that conclusion, but Agatha persisted in her search, extending her inquiries to all the hospitals of the Federal army, and within a month her persistence was rewarded.

What she learned was that Baillie Pegram's wound had been too severe to admit of his transportation far beyond Washington, and that he, in company with a few other prisoners in like condition, had been placed in an improvised hospital a few miles north of the capital city, where he still lay under treatment, with only a slender chance of recovery. Her first impulse was to go to Washington at once, and endeavour in some way to secure permission to enter the hospital as a nurse. Her friends in Washington and in Maryland discouraged this attempt, assuring her not only of its futility, but of its danger. They were convinced, indeed, that she could not even enter Washington, which was then a vast fortified camp, without the discovery of her identity by the agents of a secret service which had become well-nigh omniscient, so far as personal identities, personal histories, and personal intentions were concerned.

"Stay where you are," one of them urgently wrote her, "and keep yourself free to act if at any time a chance shall come to accomplish any good. It would spoil all and destroy the last vestige of hope, for you to attempt what you suggest. You can do no good here. You may do inestimable good if you remain where you are."

When this decision was communicated to Sam, his round black face became long, and the look of laughter completely went out of his countenance. But Sam was not an easily discouraged person, and he had come to believe in his own sagacity. So after a day or two of disconsolate moping, he set his wits at work upon this new problem. Presently an idea was born to him, and he went at once to lay it before Agatha for consideration.

"Mis' Agatha," he said, "even ef you cawn't git to Mas' Baillie, Sam kin, an' that'll be better'n nothin', won't it?"

"Yes, Sam," answered the sad-eyed young woman, "very much better than nothing. You could take care of your master, and be a comfort to him, and if the time ever should come when

anything could be done for him, you'd be on the ground to help. But how can you get to him?"

"I could manage dat, ef I was a free nigga," answered the boy, meditatively.

"But you are free, I suppose," said Agatha. "You've been brought to a free State, practically with your master's consent, and that makes you free, I believe. But —"

"O, I don't want to be a sho' 'nuff free nigga," interrupted Sam. "I ain't never a-gwine to be dat. I'se a-gwine to 'long to Mas' Baillie cl'ar to de end o' de cawn rows. But I done heah folks up heah say dat de Yankees is a-sendin' back all de niggas what runs away from der mahstahs, an' ef I ain't got nuffin' to say I'se free, dey'd sen' me back to Ferginny ef I went down dat way whar Mas' Baillie is."

Sam's information on this point was in a measure correct. For in the singleness of his purpose to save the Union at all costs, and in his anxiety not to alienate the border slave States by interfering with slavery where it legally existed, Mr. Lincoln steadfastly insisted, during the first year of the war, that military commanders should restore all fugitive slaves who should come

to them for protection, or where that could not be done, should list them and employ them in work upon fortifications and the like.

Agatha thought for a time, and then said:

"I think I can manage that, Sam. I'll try, at any rate. But I must wait till to-morrow. Tell me how you expect to get to your master."

"I don't rightly know yit, Mis' Agatha. But I'll git dar. Maybe you'll send a letter to yo' frien's down dat way, tellin' 'em Sam's all right, so's dey'll trus' me. Ef you do dat, Mis' Agatha, I'll do de res'."

It was impossible, of course, to execute legal papers setting Sam free, nor were any papers at all necessary for his use, so long as he remained in New York. But in Washington he might have to give an account of himself, and by way of making sure that he should not be seized as a runaway slave, and set to work upon the fortifications, Agatha's friend, the banker, gave him a document in which he certified that the negro boy was not a runaway slave, but was known to him as a legally free negro, who had been living in New York, but wished to go to Washington and elsewhere in search of employment.

Armed with this paper, and with full instructions from Agatha as to how to find certain of her friends, Sam set out on his journey full of determination to succeed in his affectionate purpose.

In Washington, he engaged in various small employments that yielded a revenue in the form of tips. He purchased a banjo, and ingratiated himself everywhere by singing his plantation songs, including both those that he had learned from others, and a few, such as "Oh, Eliza," which he had fabricated for himself. In the course of a week or two he learned all he needed to know about roads, military lines, and the like, and was prepared to make his way to the hospital where his master lay.

There he besought employment of menial kinds, at the hands of the surgeons and other officers, of whom there were only a very few at the post. Again he strummed his banjo and sang his songs to good purpose, impressing everybody with the conviction that he was a jolly, thoughtless, happy-go-lucky negro, and very amusing withal. The hospital was a very small one in a very lonely part of the country, and service there was ex-

tremely tedious to those who were condemned to it. Sam's minstrelsy, therefore, was more than welcome as something that pleasantly broke the monotony, and the officers concerned were anxious to keep the amusing fellow employed at the post, lest he go elsewhere. They gave him all sorts of odd jobs to do, from blacking boots and polishing spurs and buckles, to grooming a horse when privileged in that way, to show his skill in "puttin' of a satin dress onto a good animal," as he called the process.

Agatha had provided the boy with a small sum of money for use in emergencies, and, as his living had cost him nothing, he had considerably added to its amount. He cherished it jealously, feeling that it might prove to be his readiest tool in accomplishing his purposes.

For a time he was not permitted to enter the hospital, which was nothing more than an old barn in which a floor had been laid and windows cut. Four sentries guarded it, one on each of its sides. The patients within numbered about fifteen, all of them wounded Confederate officers, for whom this provision had been made until such

time as they should be sufficiently recovered to be taken North to a military prison.

Being in no regular way employed at the post, Sam was free to go and come as he pleased, and he did a good deal of night-prowling at this time. He managed in that way to establish relations with certain of Agatha's friends, whose residence was ten or a dozen miles away. He visited them at intervals in order to hear from Agatha, and report to her through them. He had not dared inquire concerning his master in any direct way, or to reveal his interest in any of the hospital patients. But when two of them had died, he had asked one of the servitors about the place what their names were, and had thus satisfied himself that neither of them was Captain Pegram. By keeping his ears on the alert, he had learned also that there were not likely to be any further deaths, and that the remaining wounded men were slowly, but quite surely, recovering. Still further, he had heard one of the doctors, in conversation with the other, comment upon the remarkable vitality of Captain Pegram.

"That wound would have killed almost any other man I ever saw, but upon my word the man

is getting well. Barring accidents, I regard him now as pretty nearly out of danger."

All this Sam duly reported to Agatha through her friends. It greatly comforted her, but it seriously alarmed Sam. For Sam had learned the ways of the place, and he knew that there was haste made to send every patient North, as soon as he was in condition to be removed without serious danger to his life; and Sam had begun to cherish hopes and lay plans which would certainly come to nothing if his master should be removed from the hospital to a military prison.

He determined, therefore, to find some way of getting into the hospital, communicating with his master, and finding out for himself precisely what the prospects were.

It was winter now, and besides the snow there was much mud around the hospital, which was freely tracked into it by all who entered. Peter, the rheumatic old negro man who was employed to scrub the place, complained bitterly of this. He said to Sam one day:

"Dese heah doctahs an' dese heah 'tendants is mighty pahticklah to have de place keeped scrumptiously clean, but dey's mighty onpahtick-

lah to wipe dar boots 'fo' enterin' de hospital. Ole Pete's done got mos' enough o' dis heah job."

"Why don't yo' quit it, den?" asked Sam, with seeming indifference.

"'Case I can't 'ford to. I ain't got no udder 'ployment fer de rest o' de wintah, an' it's a long ways to blackberry time."

"How much does dey gib yo' fer a-doin' of it?"

"'Mos' nothin' 'tall — a dollah an' a half a month an' my bo'd."

"Yes, an' de job won't las' long, nuther," said Sam, sympathetically, "'cordin' to what I heah. De rebel officers is all a-gwine to git well, I done heah de doctahs say, an' when dey does dat, dey'll be shipped off Norf, an' dis heah 'stablishment'll be broke up. You'se too ole fer sich wuk, anyways, Uncle Pete. Yo' oughter be a-nussin' o' yer knees by a fire somewhars, 'stead o' warin' of 'em out a-scrubbin' flo's. You'se got a lot o' prayin' to do yit, 'fo' yo' dies, — 'nuff to use up what knees you'se got left. Give up de job, Uncle Pete, and go off wha' you kin make yer peace wid de Lawd, as de preachahs says you must."

"But I cawn't, I tell you! I ain't got no money, an' I ain't got no 'ployment, 'ceptin' dis heah scrubbin'. Ef I had five dollahs, Ole Pete wouldn't be heah fer a day later'n day afteh to-morrow — dat's pay-day."

Sam sat silent for a time as if meditating on what he had it in mind to say, before committing himself to the rash proposal. Finally, he turned to the old man, and said:

"Look heah, Uncle Pete, I'se sorry fer you, sho' 'nuff I is. I'se done 'cumulated a little money, by close scrimpin', an' I'm half a mind to help yo' out. Lemme see. You'se a-gwine to git a dollah an' a half day after to-morrow. I kin spar yo' six dollahs mo'. Dat'll make seben dollahs an' a half. I'll do it ef you'll take pity on yerse'f an' go to town an' git yerse'f a easier sort o' wuk. Yo' kin owe me de six dollahs tell you git rich enough to pay it back."

The old man was inclined to be suspicious of a generosity of which he had never known the equal.

"Who'se a-gwine to take de job ef I gibs it up?" he asked.

"What de debbil do you k'yar 'bout dat?"

asked Sam. "Anyhow, dey ain't a-gwine to raise de wages. Yo' kin jes' bet yo' life on dat. Yo' kin do jes' as yo' please 'bout 'ceptin' de offer I done made you. I oughtn't to 'a' made it, but I'se always a-makin' of a fool o' myse'f, when my feelin's is touched. Six dollahs is a lot o' money, *hit* is. Maybe yo' think I'm Mr. Astor, to go a-throwin' of money away like dat, or, maybe yo'se Mr. Astor yerse'f, to be hesitatin' 'bout a-'ceptin' of it. Reckon I bettah withdraw de offah —"

"Who'se a-hesitatin'?" broke in old Peter, hurriedly. "I ain't never thought o' hesitatin', Sam. I'll take de money sho', an' I thank you kindly for yer generosity, Sam. You'se a mighty fine boy, Sam, an' I'se always liked you ever since I fust knowed you. Now dat you'se a-behavin' jes' like as if yo' was my own chile, I reck'lec' dat I always had a fatherly feelin' foh you, Sam. Lemme have de money now, Sam, so's I kin go to sleep to-night a-feelin' I ain't got but one mo' day to do dis heah sort o' wuk."

"Yo' won't change yo' mind?" asked Sam.

"Sartain sho'! Wish I may die ef I do."

Sam regarded that oath as one likely to be

binding upon any negro conscience, but he wished to take no risks; so putting on an air of great solemnity, and pushing his face to within four inches of the old man's, he said:

"Now you'se done swore it by de 'wish I may die,' an' you mus' keep dat sw'ar. Ef yo' don't, it'll be my solemn duty to carry out yo' wish by killin' you myse'f, an', 'fore de Lawd, I'll do it. Heah's de money."

XXIV

Flight

SAM had so far commended himself by alertness and thoroughness in whatever he did, that he had no difficulty in securing what he called "de scrubbin' contract." He now had perfect freedom of hospital ingress and egress, but he felt that he must be cautious, especially in his first revelation of his presence to his master, who, he was confident, knew nothing of his being there. He feared to surprise some exclamation from Pegram, which would, as he phrased it, "give de whole snap away."

So on the first morning he began his scrubbing at the outer door, and moved slowly on his hands and knees along the line of cots, taking sly glimpses of their occupants as he went. It was not till he reached the farther corner of the large room that he found the cot of his master. Then

with his face near the floor and scrubbing violently with his brush, he began intoning in a low voice:

"Don't say nothin', don't say nothin', don't say nothin' when yo' sees me. It's Sam sho' 'nuff, an' Sam's done come, an' don't you give it away."

To any one ten feet away, all this sounded like the humming of a chant by one who unconsciously sang below the breath as he worked. But to Baillie, who lay within a foot or two of the boy's head, the words were perfectly audible, and presently, without moving, and in a low murmuring voice, he said:

"I understand, Sam. I knew you were here. I heard you singing outside, many days ago."

Then the wounded man pretended to have difficulty in adjusting his blankets, and Sam rose and bent over the cot to help him. While doing so, he said:

"Mis' Agatha, she done brung me to New York, an' sent me heah to fin' yo'. How's you a-gittin'? Tell me, so's I kin report, an' tell me every day."

Baillie replied briefly that his wound was heal-

ing and his strength coming back, to which Sam answered:

"Don't you go fer to tell de doctah too much 'bout dat. Jes' keep as sick as you kin, while you'se a-gittin' well. I'll tell you why another time. Git 'quainted wid Sam more an' more ebery day, Mas' Baillie, so's we kin talk 'thout 'rousin' 'spicion."

In aid of this, Sam took pains, as the days went on, to establish relations with all the other patients who were well enough to talk, and as his inconsequent humour seemed to amuse them, the doctors made no objection to his loquaciousness.

It was one of the articles in Sam's philosophical creed that "yo' cawn't have too many frien's, 'case yo' cawn't never know when you may need 'em." Accordingly, he cultivated acquaintance with everybody, high and low, about the place, including the peculiarly surly man who brought the coal and the kindling-wood for the establishment. That personage was a white man of melancholy temper and extraordinary taciturnity. He went in and out of the place, wearing a long overcoat that had probably seen better days, but

so long ago as to have forgotten all about them. The only other article of his clothing that was visible was a slouch hat, the brim of which had completely lost courage and could no longer pretend to stand out from the head that wore it, but hung down like a limp lambrequin over the man's eyes. The man himself seemed in an equally discouraged condition. He shambled rather than walked, and never answered a question or responded to a salutation, except in Sam's case. To him, when the two were alone, the man would sometimes speak a few words.

Sam was daily and hourly studying everybody and everything about him, with a view to possibilities. Nobody was too insignificant and nothing too trivial for him to note and consider and remember. "Yo' cawn't never know," he philosophised, "what rock will come handiest when yo' wants to frow it at a squirrel."

As the weeks passed, Baillie Pegram so improved that he sat up, and even walked about the place a little. One day, Sam learned that Baillie and three others were deemed well enough to be removed from hospital to prison, and that the transfer was to be made two days later. Dur-

ing the night after this discovery was made, Sam trudged through a blinding snow-storm — the last, probably, of the waning winter — to the house of Agatha's friends, ten or a dozen miles away, and back again through the snow-drifts, arriving at the hospital about daylight, as he had often done before, after a prowling by night.

He had made all his arrangements but one, and he had armed himself for that, by drawing upon Agatha's friends for ten dollars in small bills.

During the day, he managed to tell his master all that was necessary concerning the emergency, and his plans for meeting it.

"To-morrow 'bout sundown, Mas' Baillie," he said, at the last. "'Member de hour. When Sam speaks to yo' at de front do', yo' is to go ter yo' cot. Yo'll fin' de coat an' de hat a-waitin' fo' yo'. Put 'em on quick, an' pull de hat down clos't, an' turn de collah up high. Den walk out'n de back do' fru de wood-shed, an' pass out de gate, jes' as ef yo' was de ole man, sayin' nuffin' to nobody. Yo' mustn't walk straight like yo' always does, but shufflin'-like, jes' as de ole man does. Den mount de coal kyart an' drive

up to de forks o' de road. Den shuffle out'n de coat an' hat, an' git inter de sleigh. Yo' frien's 'ull take kyar o' de res'."

Having thus instructed his master, Sam postponed further proceedings until the morrow. He had not yet opened negotiations with the old coal-man, — negotiations upon which the success of his plans depended, — but he trusted his wits and his determination to accomplish what he desired, and he had no notion of risking all by unnecessary haste.

Even when the coal-man came during the next morning, Sam contented himself with asking if he would certainly come again with his cart about sunset of that day, as he usually did. Having reassured himself on that point, Sam said nothing more, except that he would himself be at leisure at that time and would help bring in the load of wood.

Then Sam finished his scrubbing, and spent the afternoon in repairing the apparatus of his handicraft. He readjusted the hoops on his scrubbing-bucket, scoured his brushes, and ground the knife that he was accustomed to use in scraping the floor wherever medicines had been spilled

or other stains had been made, for Sam had a well earned reputation for thoroughness in his work. Curiously enough, he this time ground the knife-blade to a slender point, "handy," he said, "fer gittin' into cracks wid."

When the coal-man came with a load of wood, a little before sunset, dumping it outside the gate, Sam was ready to help him carry it in and split it into kindlings within the shed. For this work, when the wood had all been brought in, the old man laid off his overcoat and hat. Thereupon Sam opened negotiations.

"I'se a-gwine to a frolic to-night," he said, "an' I'se a-gwine to have a mighty good time a-playin' o' de banjo an' a-dancin', but hit's powerful cold, an' de walk's a mighty long one."

Then, as if a sudden thought had come to him, he said:

"Tell yo' what! 'Spose yo' lemme wahr yo' overcoat. Yo' ain't got far to go, an' I'll give yo' a dollah fer de use of it."

The old man hesitated, and Sam was in a hurry.

"I'll make it two dollahs, an' heah's de money clean an' new," pulling out the bills. "Say de word an' it's your'n."

The offer was too tempting to be resisted, and the bargain was quickly made.

"Reckon I better go brush it up," said Sam, taking the garment and managing to fold the soft hat into it. He passed through the door into the hospital, cast his bundle upon Baillie Pegram's bed, and walked quickly to the front door, where his master was standing looking out upon the snow, now darkening in the falling dusk.

"All ready," the negro said, in an undertone, as he passed, and Captain Pegram wearily turned and walked toward his cot. Half a minute later, what looked like the old coal-man passed into the wood-shed, and out of it at the rear, whence, with shuffling steps he walked to and through the gate, mounted the coal-cart, and slowly drove away.

Sam, hurrying around the building, entered the wood-shed just as his master was leaving it, and confronted the owner of the coat and hat that Pegram wore. He was none too soon, for the old man, seeing Pegram pass, clad in his garments, thought he was being robbed, and was about to raise a hue and cry. Sam interposed with an assumption of authority:

"Stay right whah yo' is," he commanded, "an' don't make no noise, do yo' heah? Ef you keeps quiet-like, an' stays heah at wuk fer ha'f a hour, an' den goes away 'bout yo' business a-sayin' nothin' to nobody, you'll git another dollah, an' I'll tell yo' whah to fin' yo' clo'se. Ef yo' don't do jes' as I tells yo', yo'll git dis, an' yo' won't never have no 'casion fer no clo'se no more. Do yo' heah?"

Sam held the keenly pointed knife in his hand, while the old man worked for the appointed space of half an hour. At the end of that time, Sam said:

"Now yo' may go, an' heah's yo' dollah. Yo'll fin' yer kyart at de forks o' de road, an' yer coat an' hat'll be in de kyart. But min' you don't never know nothin' 'bout dis heah transaction, fer ef yo' ever peeps, dey'll hang yo' fer helpin' a pris'ner to escape, an' I'll kill yo' besides. Go, now. Do yo' heah?"

Sam watched him pass out through the gate and turn up the road. When he had disappeared, the black strategist muttered:

"Reckon dat suggestion 'bout gittin' hisse'f 'rested fer helpin' a pris'ner 'scape, will sort o'

bar itse'f in on de ole man's min'. He won't never let hisse'f 'member nuffin' 'bout dis heah. Anyhow, Mas' Baillie's gone, an' it's time Sam was a-gittin' out o' this, too."

With that the boy secured his banjo and bade good night to the surgeon whom he met outside, saying that he was going to have a "powerful good time at de frolic."

XXV

A NARROW ESCAPE

BAILLIE PEGRAM found little difficulty in imitating the shambling gait of the old coal man as he walked to the hospital exit. In his weakness he could hardly have walked in any other fashion. He managed with difficulty to climb upon the cart, and to endure the painful drive to the forks of the road, somewhat more than half a mile away.

There he found a sleigh awaiting him, with four women in it, all muffled to the eyes in buffalo-robes, and a gentleman wrapped in a fur overcoat, on the box. The gentleman gave the reins to one of the ladies, and proceeded to help Pegram from the coal-cart, while the others stepped out upon the hard frozen snow.

The body of the sleigh was deep, and it had been filled with fresh rye straw. One of the gentlewomen parted this to either side, and spread

a fur robe upon the floor beneath, into which the gentleman hurriedly helped Baillie, drawing the robe closely together over him, and replacing the straw so that no part of the fur wrapping beneath could be seen.

All this was done quickly, and without a word, the women resumed their seats, the man cracked his whip, and the spirited horses set off at a merry pace.

By way of precaution, a roundabout road was followed, and it was late when the sleighing-party reached its destination. There the women alighted and passed into the house. The gentleman drove the sleigh into the barn, with Baillie Pegram still lying under the straw. When the horses were unhitched, their owner directed the negro, who took charge of them, to walk them back and forth down by the stables to cool them off, before putting them into their stalls. It was not until the hostler was well away from the barn that his master removed the seats and lifted Baillie from his hiding-place under the straw. By that time, a young man, perhaps thirty years old, and strong of frame, had appeared, and the two hurriedly carried the now nearly helpless

man into the house, where a bed awaited him. Stripping him, the younger man proceeded to examine the wound with the skilful eye of a surgeon.

"The wound has suffered no injury," he presently said to his host, "but the man is greatly exhausted. Will you heat some flat-irons, and place them at his feet? He must have nourishment, too, but of course it won't do to bring any of the servants in here —"

"I'll manage that," said the host. "We are all supposed to have been out on a lark, and I always have a late supper after that sort of thing. I'll have it served in the room that opens out of this. As soon as it comes, I'll send the servants away, and we can feed your patient from our table."

In the meanwhile, the ever faithful Sam, half frozen but full of courage and determination, was toiling over the flint-like snow, trying to reach the house before the morning. In order that he might the better keep his hands from freezing, he cast his banjo into a snow-filled ravine, saying:

"Reckon I sha'n't need you any more, an' ef I does, I kin git another." With that, he thrust

his hands into his pockets, where his accumulated earnings reassured him as to his ability to buy banjos at will.

It had been a part of the plan of rescue that Baillie should remain but a brief while at his present stopping-place. It was deemed certain that a search for him would be made as soon as his escape should be discovered, and the house in which he had been put to bed that night was likely to be one of the first to be examined, wherefore Sam was anxious to reach that destination as soon as possible, lest he miss his master.

But when the morning came, Baillie was in a high fever, and the doctor forbade all attempts to remove him, for a time at least. As the day advanced, the fever subsided somewhat, and Baillie grew anxious to continue his journey. Finally, the doctor hit upon a plan of procedure.

"You simply must not now undertake the long journey we had intended you to make to-day, Captain," he said, "but the distance to my house in the town is comparatively small. I might manage to take you there this afternoon, if you think you can sit up in my sleigh for a five-mile

ride, and then get out at my door and walk into the house without tottering on your legs."

Baillie eagerly protested his ability to endure the ride, and the doctor proceeded to arrange for it. Some clothing had already been provided in the house for Baillie to don in place of his uniform, and the doctor now said:

"I'm going to drive home at once. I'll be back before three o'clock. Get the captain into his citizen's clothes and have him ready by that time, but let him lie down till I come, to spare his strength. I've a patient in town, a consumptive, and I've been taking him out with me every fine day, for the sake of the air. He is not very ill at present, but he is one of us, and will be just as sick as I tell him to be when I get him here. I'm afraid I shall find it necessary to ask you to keep him for a day or two."

The hint was understood, and the doctor drove away behind a pair of good trotters. Before the appointed time he returned, bringing his patient with him, and at his request the sick man was put to bed in the room where Baillie had passed the night.

A few minutes later a party of soldiers rode

up and reported that they were under orders to search the house for an escaped Confederate officer. The doctor, with a well assumed look of professional concern on his face, said to the officer in command of the squad:

"That is a trifle unfortunate just now. I have a patient in the adjoining room — a young man in pulmonary consumption. Of course you'll have to search the house, but I beg you, Lieutenant, to spare my patient. His condition is such that — "

"I'll be very careful, I assure you. I'll go alone to search that room, and make as little disturbance as possible."

Still wearing a look of anxiety, the doctor said:

"Couldn't you leave that room unexamined, Lieutenant? I assure you on my honour that there is nobody there except my patient."

The physician's anxiety suggested a new thought to the officer's mind.

"I take your word for that, Doctor. I believe you when you tell me there's nobody but your patient in that room. But your patient may happen to be the very man we want, even without your knowing the fact. Our man is very ill,

recovering from a severe wound, — and he'd be sure to need a doctor after walking, as he must have done, a dozen miles in this snow. Pardon me, Doctor; I do not mean to accuse you of any complicity; but you are a physician, bound to do your best for any patient who sends for you, and to keep his confidence — professional ethics requires that. I shall not blame you if I find your patient to be my man. You are doing only your professional duty. But I must see the man. I can tell whether he's the one we want. Our man has been shot through the body, and the wound is not yet completely healed. My orders are to look for that wound on every man I have reason to suspect, and I must do my duty."

"O, certainly," replied the physician. "You'll find no wounds on my patient, and I earnestly beg you to avoid exciting him more than is absolutely necessary. You see, in his condition, any undue excitement — "

"O, I'll be very careful, Doctor, very careful, indeed."

"Thank you. It is very good of you. You see, as I was saying, in his condition, any undue excitement — "

"O, yes, I know all about that. You may trust me to be careful."

"Again thank you. Come, Bob," looking at his watch, and addressing Baillie, who was sitting by, "we must be going. I've half a dozen patients waiting for me."

Baillie rose, nerving himself for the effort, bowed to the lieutenant, and walked out of the house. A minute later, muffled to the ears in furs, the two men were speeding over the snow, with Sam clinging on behind, and playing the part of "doctah's man."

"Here," said the physician, handing Baillie a flask, "take a stiff swig of that. You must keep up your strength." Then after he had replaced the flask in his overcoat pocket, he chuckled:

"That was very neatly done — to have you walk away in that fashion from under the very nose of the man who was looking for you."

Sam echoed the chuckle, and Baillie said:

"I hope your patient will suffer no harm from all this!"

"O, not a bit. He's in the game, and he'll enjoy it, especially after they are gone, and he suddenly recovers from his extreme illness."

"But why was it necessary to take him there at all?"

"Why, under the circumstances, it would never have done for me to be seen driving away from there with a companion when I had been seen driving out there alone. As it is, your presence in the sleigh is satisfactorily accounted for to everybody who sees us. But how about your discarded uniform? Won't they find that?"

"No. Sam reduced it to ashes early this morning, and then aired the room to get rid of the smell of burning wool."

"That was excellent. Who thought of doing it?"

"Sam."

XXVI

Mademoiselle Roland

DURING all those months of waiting, Agatha Ronald had remained in New York, under the advice of Marshall Pollard's friend, who was accustomed to put his counsel into the form of something like a command whenever that seemed to him necessary. She was urged to remain in the city, too, by all her friends who were near Baillie Pegram's prison hospital. "Stay where you are," was the burden of all their letters. "You can do no good here, and you may do much harm if you attempt to come, while you will very surely be needed where you are, if we succeed, as we hope, in effecting Captain Pegram's escape. We shall do all that is possible to accomplish that, but when we do he will still be a very ill man, — for if he is to escape at all, it must be before he sufficiently recovers to be

sent to a prison. You will be needed then to care for him somewhere, for, of course, he must not remain in this quarter of the country. Be patient and trust us — and Sam. For that boy is a wonder of devotion and ingenuity. He has just left us to return to the hospital before morning. He makes the journey on foot by night, three times a week, walking twenty odd miles each trip, in all sorts of weather. When we remonstrated with him to-night — for a fearful storm is raging — and told him he should have waited for better weather, he indignantly replied: 'Den Mis' Agatha would have had to wait a whole day beyond her time fer news. No sirree. Sam's a-gwine to come on de 'pinted nights, ef it rains pitchforks an' de win' blows de ha'r offen he haid.'"

So Agatha busied herself with such concerns as were hers. She laboured hard to improve the service of her "underground railroad," and sent medicines and surgical appliances through the lines with a frequency that surprised the authorities at Richmond. She corresponded in a disguised way with her friends in and near Washington, offering all she could of helpful sugges-

tion to them and through them to Sam. It was by her command that Sam told his master, while in the hospital, just where and how she was to be found if he should escape, and how perfectly equipped she was to come to his assistance in such a case.

For the rest, she battled bravely with her sorrow and her anxieties, lest they unfit her for prompt and judicious action when the time for action should come. In brief, she behaved like the devoted and heroic woman she was.

After long months of weary waiting, her pulse was one day set bounding by the tidings that the master of Warlock had escaped from the hospital, and was in safe hands. This news was communicated by means of a telegram, which said only, "Dress goods satisfactory. Trimmings excellent."

Fuller news came by letter a day later, and it was far less joyous. It told her that the exposure, exertion, and excitement of the escape had brought Baillie into a condition of dangerous illness; that he lay helpless in the physician's house; that no one was permitted to see him for fear of dis-

covery, except Sam, who had been installed as nurse.

Other letters followed this daily for a week, each more discouraging than the last. Finally came one from the doctor himself, in answer to Agatha's demand, in which he wrote:

"I labour under many difficulties. Captain Pegram's presence in my house must be concealed as long as that can be accomplished. I am a bachelor, and I often receive patients for treatment here, but in this case the man's illness is the consequence of a bullet wound, and should that fact become known, it would pretty certainly cause an inquiry; for my Southern sentiments are well known, and in the eyes of the governmental secret service, I am very distinctly a 'suspect.' The consequence of all this is that I dare not introduce a competent nurse into the house.

"Sam is willing and absolutely devoted, but of course he knows nothing of nursing. Yet nursing, and especially the tender nursing of a woman, is this patient's chief need. If he were in New York now, where political rancour is held in check by the fact that sentiment there is divided, and where people are too busy to meddle with

other people's affairs, we could manage the matter easily. You can scarcely imagine how different the conditions here are. I might easily command the services of any one of half a dozen or a dozen gentlewomen of Maryland whom I could trust absolutely. But the very fact of my bringing one of them here to nurse a stranger, would set a pack of clever detectives on the scent, and within twenty-four hours they would know the exact truth.

"You will see, my dear young lady, how perplexing a situation it is. I hoped at first that Capt. P. might presently rally sufficiently to stand the trip to New York. I could have managed that. But he simply cannot be moved now, or for many weeks to come. It would be murder to make the attempt."

When Agatha had read this latter, her mind was instantly made up.

"I must go to him at all hazards and all costs, and nurse him myself. But first I must think out a way, so that there may be no failure."

She sat for an hour thinking and planning. Then she got up and hurriedly scribbled two letters. It was after nightfall, and Agatha had

never yet gone into the streets by night. Her terror of that particular form of danger was great. But these letters must be posted at once, and by her own hand. There were no lamp-post mailing-boxes in those half-civilised days, and she must travel many blocks to reach the nearest post-office station. She took up the little pistol which she had so long carried for the purpose of defending her honour by self-destruction, if need should arise, examined its chambers, placed it beneath her cloak, and hurried into the street.

Then, as now, to the shame of what we call our civilisation, no woman could traverse the thoroughfares of a great city after dark and unattended without risk of insult or worse. Then, as now, a costly police force utterly ignored its duty of so vigilantly protecting the helpless that the streets should be as safe to women as to men, by night as well as by day.

During that little walk of a dozen city blocks through streets that the public adequately paid to have securely guarded, Agatha felt far more of fear than she had experienced while facing the canister fire of Baillie Pegram's guns.

She escaped molestation more by good fortune

than by any security that police protection afforded or now affords to the wives and daughters of a community that calls itself civilised, and pays princely sums every year for a police protection that it does not get.

One of her letters was addressed to a friend in Baltimore. It gave her the address of Marshall Pollard's friend, the banker, and added:

"On receipt of this you are to telegraph, asking him to find and send you a nurse who speaks French — a Frenchwoman preferred. He will send me, in response to the demand, as Mlle. Roland, — an anagram of my own name. I shall speak nothing but French in your house, and afterward."

To Baillie's doctor she wrote:

"I think I see a way out of your difficulties. Can you not make a new diagnosis of Captain Pegram's case — finding him ill of tuberculosis, or typhoid, or some other wasting malady corresponding with his external appearance, thus concealing the fact that he suffers in consequence of a wound? He speaks French like a Parisian — I suppose he can even dream in that language, as I always do — so for safety and by way of

forwarding my plan, you may regard him as a French gentleman who has fallen ill during his travels in America, and come to you for treatment. You are to be very anxious to secure a French nurse for him, and to that end you may write as soon as you receive this, to the gentlewoman whose address in Baltimore is enclosed, asking her to procure such a nurse if she can. I will be that nurse, and will know no English during my stay. This plan will enable me to go to Captain Pegram's bedside without exciting the least suspicion, and, when he is sufficiently recovered to travel, there will be little if any trouble in arranging for his nurse to take the convalescent to New York, and thence to Europe. Once out of the country and well again, he can go to Nassau, and thence to a Southern port on one of the English blockade-running ships. To secure all this we must scrupulously maintain the fiction that he is a Frenchman, and I a French nurse."

Agatha's first care on the next morning was to visit the banker and instruct him as to the part he was to play in the conspiracy, when the telegram should come from Baltimore. That

done, she plied her needle nimbly, fashioning caps, aprons and the like, such as French nurses only wore at that time, before there were any trained nurses other than Frenchwomen among us. She was already wearing black gowns, of course, and when she added a jet rosary and a stiffly starched broad white collar to her costume, she had no need to inform anybody that she was a hospital-bred nurse from Paris.

In the little Maryland town where Baillie Pegram lay in a stupor, her advent attracted much curious attention, especially because of the jaunty little nurse's cap she wore, and of her inability to speak English. But this curiosity averted, rather than invited suspicion, as Agatha had intended and planned that it should do.

The physician's knowledge of the French language was scant, and his pronunciation was execrably bad, but he managed to greet the nurse in that tongue on her arrival, and to say, very gallantly:

"Now my patient should surely get well. Under care of such a nurse even a dead man might be persuaded back to life."

XXVII

Agatha's wonder-story

AGATHA had been for more than a week at Baillie Pegram's bedside before he manifested any consciousness of her presence. But from the very first her ministrations had seemed to soothe him.

Even when his fever brought active delirium with it, a word from his soft-voiced French nurse quieted him, and each day showed less of fever and more of strength.

At last one day he lay quiet, and Agatha sat stitching at something near the foot of the bed. Her face was bent over her work, so that she did not see when he opened his eyes and gazed steadily at her for a time. Not until she looked up, as she was accustomed watchfully to do every little while, did he fully recognise her. Then, in a feeble voice, he spoke her name — nothing more.

She gently readjusted his pillows, and he fell

into a more natural sleep than he had known since his relapse had befallen him.

When he waked again, Sam was sitting by, Agatha having left the room for a brief while.

"Who has been here, Sam?" the sick man asked.

"Nobody, Mas' Baillie, on'y de French lady what's a-nussin' of yo'," replied Sam, lying with the utmost equanimity, in accordance with what he believed to be the spirit of his instructions.

"I dreamed it, then. Tell me where I am, Sam."

"I ain't Sam an' yo' ain't Mas' Baillie; I'se jes' *garshong*, an' yo'se a French gentleman, an' yo' cawn't talk nuffin' but French, an' so 'tain't no use fer yo' to try to talk to me. Yo' mus' jes' go to sleep, now, an' when de French nuss comes back, yo' kin ax her in French like whatsomever yo' wants to know."

Baillie's bewildered wits struggled for a moment with the problem of his own identity, but before the French nurse returned he had fallen asleep again. It was not until the next day, therefore, that he had opportunity to ask Agatha

anything, but his fever had abated by that time, and his mind was rapidly clearing.

"Tell me about it all, please," he said to her.

"Sh — speak only in French," she replied, herself speaking in that tongue. "It is very necessary, and address me as Mademoiselle Roland."

Then she told him so much as was necessary to prevent him from exercising his imagination in an exciting way. When she had explained that he was still in the house of the doctor who had aided him in his escape, and that the pretence of his being a French gentleman and she a French nurse was necessary for safety, she added:

"I came to you when you were very ill and needed me, and I shall stay with you so long as you need me. You mustn't talk now. Wait a few days, and you will be strong enough."

The prediction was fulfilled, and a few days later Agatha told him the whole story of her own and Sam's search for him, dwelling particularly upon Sam's devotion and the ingenuity he had brought to bear upon the problem of rescue. For at times when there was no possibility that anybody should overhear, Agatha had made

Sam tell her all the details of that affair, until she knew as well as he did every word he had spoken and every step he had taken in the execution of his purpose.

Baillie's progress toward recovery was necessarily slow, but it was steady and continuous, and after many weeks, when he was permitted to sit up for awhile each day, he begged to hear about the progress of the war.

It was now September, 1862, and what she had to tell him was one of the most dramatic stories that the history of our American war has to relate.

McClellan had proved himself to be a great organiser and a masterful engineer, and he had at last tried to prove himself to be also a great general.

He had so perfectly fortified the city of Washington that a brigade or a division or two might easily hold it against the most determined hosts. He had organised the "regiments cowering upon the Potomac," and the scores of other regiments that had come pouring into the capital, into one of the finest armies that had ever taken the field in any country in the world. He had multiplied his

artillery, and swelled his cavalry force to proportions that rendered it numerically superior to Stuart's "Mamalukes." He had so perfected his supply departments — quartermaster's, commissary's, medical, and ordnance — that their work was accomplished with the precision, the certainty, and the smoothness of well-ordered machinery.

He had brought under his immediate command a perfectly organised army, numbering nearly or quite two hundred thousand men.[1] The Confederates had in Virginia about one-fourth that number available for the defence of Richmond. Nor could this army of defence be reinforced from other parts of the South, for during the long waiting-time in Virginia, events of the most vital importance had been occurring at the West. Chief of these in importance, though the government at Washington was slow to recognise the fact, was the discovery there of a really capable commander — General Grant. He had captured Forts Henry and Donelson, thus gaining con-

[1] Rossiter Johnson, in his "History of the War of Secession," says that 121,000 were sent to Fortress Monroe and seventy thousand left at Washington, besides McDowell's corps and Bleuker's division.

trol of the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers, breaking the Confederate line of defence, and pushing the Southern armies completely out of Kentucky, and almost out of Tennessee. He was preparing, when McClellan moved, to complete that part of his work by fighting the tremendous battle of Shiloh.

Thus the Confederates could not afford to draw so much as a single regiment or battery from that field for the strengthening of Johnston's force in Virginia. Finally, early in March, Johnston had withdrawn from Centreville and Manassas to the immediate neighbourhood of Richmond.

It was in such circumstances that McClellan at last undertook to use the great army he had created, for the purpose it was meant to accomplish. Early in the spring, he transferred 120,000 men by water to Fortress Monroe, leaving seventy thousand at and near Washington, to hold that capital secure. Somewhat more than half of this force at Washington was to advance upon Richmond by way of Fredericksburg, and add forty thousand men to McClellan's great army when he should sit down before the Confederate capital. He, meanwhile, was to march

up the peninsula formed by the York and James Rivers, supported by the navy on either side.

Richmond was seemingly doomed, and everywhere at the North the expectation was that McClellan, with his overwhelming forces and his well-nigh perfect organisation, would make an end of the war before the first anniversary of the battle of Manassas.

If McClellan had been half as capable in the field as he had proved himself to be in the work of organisation, this might easily have happened. But he was cautious to a positively paralysing degree. It was his habit of mind to overestimate his enemy's strength to his own undoing. Thus when he began his advance up the peninsula, with nearly sixty thousand men, to be almost immediately reinforced to one hundred thousand and more, he found a Confederate line stretched across the peninsula at Yorktown. It consisted of thirteen thousand men under Magruder, and with his enormous superiority of numbers, McClellan might have run over it in a day, while with his transports, protected by gunboats, he might easily have carried his army by it on either side, compelling its retreat or surrender. But in his ex-

cessive caution he assumed that the entire Confederate force was concentrated there, and his imagination doubled the strength of that force. He confidently believed that the Yorktown lines were defended by an army of eighty thousand or more, and instead of finding out the facts by an assault, he wasted nearly a month in scientifically besieging the little force of thirteen thousand men, with an army six or eight times as great, and a siege train of enormous strength.

When at last he had pushed his siege parallels near enough for an assault, he found his enemy gone, and discovered that the great frowning cannon in their works were nothing more than wooden logs, painted black, and mounted like heavy guns.

The North had not yet found a general capable of commanding the superb army it had created, or of making effective use of those enormously superior resources which from the beginning had been at its disposal. Grant had splendidly demonstrated his capacity at Shiloh, but Halleck had immediately superseded him, and completely thrown away the opportunity there presented. Grant was still denied any but volunteer rank,

and for many weeks after Shiloh he was left, as he has himself recorded, with none but nominal command, and was not even consulted by his immeasurably inferior superior.

McClellan at last reached the neighbourhood of Richmond, and placed his great army on the eastern and northern fronts of the Confederate capital. But still permitting his imagination to mislead him, he confidently believed the Confederate forces to be quite twice as numerous as they were in fact. So instead of pressing them vigorously, as a more enterprising and less excessively cautious commander would have done, he proceeded to fortify and for weeks kept his splendid army idle in a pestilential swamp, whose miasms were far deadlier than bullets and shells could have been.

At the end of May the Confederates assailed his left wing, believing that a flood in the river had isolated it from the rest of the army, and a bloody five days' battle ensued, with no decisive results, except to demonstrate the fighting quality of the troops under McClellan's command.

Still he hesitated and fortified, and urgently called for reinforcements. These to the number

of forty thousand were on their way to join him, marching directly southward from Washington.

But the Confederates had been more fortunate than their foes. They had found their great commander, a piece of good fortune which did not happen to the Federal armies until nearly two years later. After the battle of Seven Pines at the end of May and the beginning of June, Robert E. Lee assumed personal command of the forces defending Richmond, and from that hour the great game of war was played by him with a sagacity and a boldness that had not been seen before.

Lee's problem was to drive McClellan's army away from Richmond, and transfer the scene of active hostilities to some more distant point. To that end he must prevent the coming of McDowell with his army to McClellan's assistance. Accordingly he ordered Jackson to sweep down the Shenandoah valley, threatening an advance upon Washington in its rear, thus putting the Federals there upon their defence. He rightly believed that the excessive concern felt at the North for the safety of the capital would make Jackson's operations an occasion of great alarm.

The result was precisely what Lee had intended. Jackson swept like a hurricane through the valley, moving so rapidly and appearing so suddenly at unexpected and widely separated points as to seem both ubiquitous and irresistible. The Federal army which was marching to reinforce McClellan was promptly turned aside and sent over the mountains to meet and check Jackson. While it was hurrying westward, Jackson suddenly slipped out of the valley and carried his "foot cavalry" — as his rapidly marching corps had come to be called — to the neighbourhood of Richmond, where Lee was ready to fall upon his adversary in full force, striking his right flank like a thunderbolt, pushing into his rear, pressing him back in successive encounters, threatening his base of supplies on the York River, and finally compelling him to retreat to the cover of his gunboats at Harrison's Landing on the James.

All this constituted what is known as the "Seven Days' Battles." It was a brilliant operation, attended at every step by heroic fighting on both sides, and by consummate skill on both — for if Lee's successful operation for his enemy's dislodgment was good strategy, McClellan's suc-

cessful withdrawal of his army from its imperilled position to one in which it could not be assailed, was scarcely less so.

But still more dramatic events were to follow. McClellan had been driven away from the immediate neighbourhood of the Confederate capital, but his new position at Harrison's Landing was one from which he might at any moment advance again either upon Richmond or upon Petersburg, which was afterward proved to be the military key to the capital. His army was still numerically stronger than Lee's, and it might be reinforced at any time, and to any desired extent, while Lee had already under his command every man that could be spared from other points. More important still, the fighting strength of McClellan's forces had been bettered by the battling they had done. The men were inured to war work now, and had improved in steadiness and discipline under the tutelage of experience.

Except that its confidence in its general was somewhat impaired, the Army of the Potomac was a stronger and more trustworthy war implement than it had been at the beginning. So long as it should remain where it was, Lee must keep

the greater part of his own force in the intrenchments in front of Richmond, and the seat of war must remain discouragingly near the Confederate capital. In the meanwhile a new Federal force, called the Army of Virginia, had been sent out from Washington under General John Pope, to assail Richmond from the north and west, while securely covering Washington. Pope's base was at Manassas, and his army had been pushed forward to the line of the Rappahannock, where there was no army to meet it and check its advance upon Richmond.

Lee must act quickly. For should Pope come within striking-distance of Richmond on the northwest, McClellan's army would very certainly advance from the east, and Richmond would be threatened by a stronger force than ever before.

But Lee could not move in adequate force to meet and check Pope's advance, without leaving Richmond undefended against any advance that McClellan might see fit to make. His perplexing problem was to compel the withdrawal of McClellan, and the transfer of his army to Washington.

To effect this, Lee again played upon the ner-

vous apprehension felt in Washington for the safety of that city. He detached Jackson, and sent him to the Rappahannock to threaten Pope, while remaining within reach of Richmond in case of need. This movement increased the apprehension in Washington, and a considerable part of McClellan's force was withdrawn by water. Thereupon Lee sent another corps to the Rappahannock, a proceeding which led to the withdrawal of pretty nearly all that remained of McClellan's army, to reinforce Pope, and the abandonment of the campaign by way of the peninsula. Lee instantly transferred the remainder of his army to the Rappahannock, leaving only a small garrison in the works at Richmond.

Pope was alert to meet Lee at every point, and he was being strengthened by daily reinforcements from what had been McClellan's army. But in Pope, with all his energy and dash and extraordinary self-confidence, the Federal government had not found a leader capable of playing the great war game on equal terms with Robert E. Lee. Grant and Sherman were still in subordinate commands at the West, while Halleck, who believed in neither of them, had been brought to

Washington and placed in supreme control of all the Union armies.

Lee quickly proved himself greatly more than a match for Pope in the art of war. Making a brave show of intending to force his way across the river at a point where Pope could easily hold his own, Lee detached Jackson and sent him around Bull Run Mountains and through Thoroughfare Gap to fall upon his adversary's base at Manassas. As soon as Jackson was well on his way, Lee sent other forces to join him, while still keeping up his pretence of a purpose to force a crossing.

It was not until the head of Jackson's column appeared near Manassas that Pope suspected his adversary's purpose. He then hastily fell back from the river, and concentrated all his forces at Manassas, while Lee, with equal haste, moved, with the rest of his army, to join Jackson.

His strategy had completely succeeded, and he promptly assailed Pope, with his entire force, on the very field where the first great battle of the war had been fought, a little more than a year before.

Pope struggled desperately, but after two days

of battle, he was completely beaten and forced to take refuge behind the defences of Washington.

This was at the beginning of September, just three months after Lee had taken personal command of the Army of Northern Virginia. Within that brief time he had done things, the simplest statement of which reads like a wonder-story. At the beginning of June a Federal army of 120,000 men lay almost within cannon-shot of the Confederate capital, while another Federal force about one-third as large was marching unopposed to form a junction with it, and still other Federal armies occupied the valley and sent raiders at will throughout Northern Virginia. At the beginning of September there remained no Federal army at all in Virginia to oppose Lee's will, whatever it might chance to be. McClellan with his grand army had been beaten in battle, and driven into a retreat which ended in his complete withdrawal, after a disastrous campaign, which at its beginning had seemed certain of success. Jackson had cleared the valley of armies superior to his own in numbers. Pope had been outwitted in strategy, beaten in battle, and driven to cover at Washington.

That was the story that Agatha related to Baillie early in September, when he was fit to hear it. It stirred his blood with enthusiasm, and bred in him an eagerness almost dangerous, to be at the head of his battery again, and a sharer in this splendid work of war.

"Your story is not ended yet," he said, when Agatha had finished. "It is 'to be continued,' — be very sure of that. Lee will not rest content with what he has done, marvellous as it is. He took the offensive as soon as he had disposed of McClellan. He will surely not now assume the defensive again, as our army did a year ago after the battle of Manassas. He is obviously made of quite other stuff than that of his predecessors in command. And here am I losing my share in it all, — a convalescent in charge of a nurse, and in hiding in the enemy's country. I tell you, Agatha, I must break out of this. As soon as I have strength enough to ride a horse, I must find a way of getting back to Virginia. And with the stimulus of strong desire, I shall not be long now in regaining that much of strength. In the meanwhile, I must think out a plan by which I

can pass the Potomac without falling into the enemy's hands."

"I have already thought of all that," returned his companion, "and I have had others thinking of it, too, — all the friends in Maryland with whom I am in correspondence. After studying the conditions minutely we are agreed in the positive conviction that it will be impossible for you to get through the Federal lines, which are more rigidly drawn and more vigilantly guarded now than ever before. You cannot even start on such a journey without being arrested and imprisoned, and that would completely defeat your purpose."

"I must take the chances, then. For I simply will not sit idly here after I get well enough to sit in a saddle."

"Listen," commanded Agatha. "You are exciting yourself, and that is very bad for you. Besides, it is wholly unnecessary, for I have thought myself not into despair, but into hopefulness, rather. I have devised a plan, the success of which is practically assured in advance, by which you and I are going back into the Confederacy. No, I will not tell you what it is just now. You have excited and wearied yourself too much

already. You must go back to your bed now, and sleep for several hours. When you wake, you shall have something to eat, and after that, if I find you sufficiently calm, I will tell you all about it. In the meantime, you may rest easy in your mind, for my plan is sure to succeed, and it will not be difficult of execution."

XXVIII

When a man talks too much

WHEN Baillie had had his rest, he asked Agatha again to tell him of her plans. She explained that it was understood in the little town that he was a French gentleman who had suffered a severe hemorrhage; that as soon as he should be sufficiently recovered, it was his purpose to return to his own country in charge of his French nurse; that she planned in that way to sail with him from New York for Liverpool, where he would be free, as soon as his health should return, to go to the Bahamas and sail thence for Charleston, Wilmington, or some other Southern port, in one of the English blockade-runners that were now making trips almost with the regularity of packets.

Baillie approved the plan, though he lamented the length of time its execution must consume.

"Agatha," he said, — for since that morning

at Fairfax Court-house he had addressed her only by her first name, — "I owe you my life, and I shall owe you my liberty, too, as soon as this admirable plan of yours can be carried out. I owe you, even now, such liberty as I have, for but for you — "

"You mustn't forget Sam," she interrupted; "it was he and not I who rescued you from the prison hospital."

"O, my appreciation of Sam's devotion is limitless, and my gratitude to him will last so long as I live. But it was you who brought him North; it was you who planned my rescue at terrible risk to yourself, and put Sam in the way of accomplishing it. And the doctor tells me without any sort of qualification that but for your coming to me as a nurse when you did, I should have died certainly and quickly. Don't interrupt me, please, I'm not going to embarrass you with an effort to thank you for what you have done. There is a generosity so great that expressions of thanks in return for it are a mockery — almost an insult, just as an offer to pay for it would be. I shall not speak of these things again — not now at least, not until time and place and

circumstance shall be fit. I only want you to know that silence on my part does not signify indifference."

Baillie made no reference to that occasion when an untimely declaration of his love had been wrung from him only to be met by a passionless reminder that the time and place were inappropriate. He felt instinctively that any reference to that utterance of his would be in effect a new declaration of his love. In this spirit of chivalry, Baillie scrupulously guarded both his manner and his words at this time, lest his feelings should betray him into some expression that might embarrass the woman whose care of him must continue for some time to come. Feeling, on this occasion, that he had approached dangerously near to some utterance which might subject his companion to embarrassment, he resolutely turned the conversation into less hazardous channels.

"Your plan is undoubtedly the best that could be made under the circumstances," he said, "and as for the waste of time, we must simply reconcile ourselves to that. After all, I cannot hope to be strong enough for several months to come, to resume command of my battery in such cam-

paigns as this great leader of ours will surely give us. For he is really and truly a great leader, Agatha. Only a great general could have wrought the marvels he has achieved. He would have proved himself great if he had done nothing more than prevent McClellan's reinforcement by sending Jackson to the valley. That was a great thought. And the next was greater. Having compelled the Federals to divert their reinforcing army from its purpose, he brought Jackson to Richmond, and fell upon McClellan with a fury that compelled his vastly superior army to abandon its campaign and retreat to the cover of its gunboats. There was a second achievement of the kind that only great generals accomplish. And even that did not fulfil the measure of his greatness. With a truly Napoleonic impulse, and by truly Napoleonic methods, he instantly converted his successful defence of Richmond into an offence which has been equally successful, so far. By his prompt movement against Pope he has compelled the complete abandonment of McClellan's campaign and the withdrawal of his army from Virginia. By his crushing defeat of Pope, he has cleared Virginia of its enemies, and

changed the aspect of the war, from one of timorous defence on the part of the Confederates to one of confident aggression."

"What a pity it is," answered Agatha, "that some such man was not in command when the first battle of Manassas was won!"

"Yes. Such a man, with such an opportunity, would have made a speedy end of the trouble. He would never have given McClellan a chance to organise such an army as that which has been besieging Richmond. However, that is not what I was thinking of. I was going to say that a man capable of doing what Lee has done, will not rest content with that. He will continue in the aggressive way in which he has begun, and we shall hear presently of other battles and other campaigns. Agatha, I simply *must* bear a part in all this. I am getting stronger every day now, and can sit up two hours at a time. Why can we not now carry out your plan? Why can we not go at once to New York in our assumed personalities, and sail immediately, so as to save all the time we can?"

"I have thought of that," the young woman answered, "but the doctor peremptorily forbids

it for the present. He hopes you will be well enough two or three weeks hence to make the effort, but to make it short of that time, he says, would be almost certainly to spoil all by bringing on a relapse. You must be patient; we shall in that way make our success a certainty, and the war will last long enough for you to have your part in it, surely."

"Yes, unhappily for our country, it will last long enough."

The next morning brought news of a startling character. Lee was already beginning to fulfil Baillie's prediction by an aggressive campaign. Having driven the enemy out of Virginia, he now undertook to transfer the scene of the fighting to the region north of the Potomac. He had sent Jackson again to clear the valley, and was marching another corps northward upon a parallel line east of the mountains, while holding the remainder of his small but potent army in readiness to form a junction with either of the detached corps when necessary. The movement clearly foreshadowed a campaign in Maryland which, if it should prove successful, would place the Confederates in rear of Washington, and render that capital untenable,

if Lee should win a single decisive battle north of the Potomac.

The alarm in Washington was such as almost to precipitate a panic. For had not Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia proved themselves far more than a match for every general and every army that had tried conclusions with them? Moreover, as they were advancing, full of the enthusiasm of recent victory, and free to pursue whatever routes they pleased, there was nobody to meet them except one or the other of two generals already discredited by defeat at Lee's hands, and an army drawn from those that the Army of Northern Virginia had so recently overthrown in the field.

Pope was no longer thought of as a leader fit for the task of meeting Lee. His campaign in Virginia had ended so disastrously, that men forgot all his former achievements, at Island Number Ten in the Mississippi, and elsewhere. He had already been removed from command and sent to fight Indians in the Northwest. There remained only McClellan, whom Lee had already outmanœuvred and outfought, and both the government and the army had lost confidence in

him. But the emergency was great, and McClellan, who had been removed, was again ordered to take command.

From the two armies that had been driven out of Virginia, a new one was quickly organised, which greatly outnumbered Lee's force. But instead of moving quickly to the assault, as Grant, or Sherman, or Thomas would have done under like circumstances, McClellan moved at a tortoise-like pace, giving his adversary ample time in which to unite his three columns, pass the Potomac unmolested, and push forward into Maryland.

All this was to come a little later, however. On the morning when Agatha read the newspapers to Baillie, all that was known was that Lee was rapidly moving northward, with evident intent to invade Maryland and push his columns into the rear of Washington.

"This is good news for us, Agatha," Baillie said, when the despatches had been read. "Unless Lee receives a check, the Army of Northern Virginia will be swarming all about us here within three or four days. If that occurs, you and I and Sam will have no difficulty in going to Vir-

ginia by a much more direct route than the one we have been planning to follow. An ambulance ride with liberty for its objective will do me no harm, while you and Sam shall be provided with good horses. Stuart will take care of that, even if he has to capture the horses from the enemy."

"We may safely trust him for so much of accommodation," answered the girl. "But if you excite yourself as you are doing now, you'll be ill again, and spoil all. You must go back to bed at once and go to sleep. That is your shortest road to rescue, now, whether Lee comes this way or is beaten back. In either case you will need all of strength that you can manage to accumulate."

The sick man obeyed, so far at least as going to bed was concerned. But he found it impossible to comply with his nurse's further injunction by going to sleep. His pulses were throbbing violently with the excitement of hope, and his nerves were tense almost to the verge of collapse. When the doctor returned from his round of visits he found his patient in a fever that, in one so weak, was dangerous. During the following night Baillie grew worse, and by the next morning the

physician was convinced that he had lost most if not all of the ground that he had gained during three weeks of convalescence.

"Mademoiselle Roland," he said, "I must command you to forbid him to talk hereafter, even in French."

Baillie heard the remark, and came instantly to Agatha's defence.

"It was not her fault, Doctor," he said. "It was all my own."

"O, I know that," answered the physician. "She's the discreetest nurse I ever knew, while you are without question the most obstinate, cantankerous, and unruly patient a nurse was ever called upon to keep in subjection."

"Am I all that?" Baillie asked Agatha, when the doctor had left the room; "all that he said?"

"No, certainly not. But you mustn't talk. Go to sleep."

"Thank you!" was all that he could say in the stupor which the physician had induced with a sleeping potion.

XXIX

A struggle of giants

WHEN Baillie woke from his drug-compelled sleep, his condition was far better than the doctor had anticipated. Lee was coming now, and the sick man was buoyed and strengthened by a confident hope of speedy rescue. The Army of Northern Virginia was in Maryland, and Baillie was sure that it would push rapidly eastward to and beyond the town where he had so long lain ill.

So it would have done if all had gone well. But there was a Federal force of eleven thousand men at Harper's Ferry. By all the principles of strategy it ought to have retired as soon as Lee crossed the Potomac above or below that point. To remain was to be cut off and to invite capture. McClellan, as a trained and scientific soldier, understood this perfectly, and he wished the force at Harper's Ferry to be withdrawn and added to

his army. He was overruled by the civilian authorities at Washington, and the detached force remained in its entrenchments, completely isolated and helpless.

But in the meanwhile its presence at Harper's Ferry completely blocked Lee's only secure route of retreat in case of disaster. It was absolutely necessary for him to reduce it before continuing his progress northward or eastward. To that end he was obliged to send Jackson back across the Potomac, with orders to assail Harper's Ferry from the south, while other forces, detached for that purpose, should hold positions north and east of the town, thus preventing the garrison's escape.

Jackson did his part promptly and perfectly, as it was his custom to do. He carried the place, capturing the entire garrison of eleven thousand men, and all the guns, ammunition, and military stores, which had been accumulated there in vast quantities.

This was a very important capture, but in order to accomplish it, Lee had been compelled to scatter his forces in a dangerous fashion, besides losing the advantage that would have attended

a rapid advance against an enemy who could not know whither he purposed to go, but must guard all roads at once. For from Lee's position after he had crossed the river it was open to him to advance upon Washington or Baltimore or Philadelphia as he might elect, keeping his adversary in the meanwhile in a state of embarrassing uncertainty as to his purposes.

But when he sent Jackson back and detached other strong forces to hold the avenues of escape from Harper's Ferry, his army was badly scattered, its several parts lying at too great a distance from each other for ready coöperation.

During the consequent days of waiting, McClellan was advancing in leisurely fashion to meet the Confederate movement, and his army was every day adding to its strength by the hurrying forward of fresh regiments and brigades to its reinforcement.

Finally Lee issued an order setting forth in detail his plan for concentrating his scattered forces. Copies of this order, showing the exact location of each part of the army and the movements to be made by each, were sent to all of

the corps commanders. One of those copies was lost, and fell into McClellan's hands.

For once that most leisurely of generals was in a hurry. His opportunity had come to destroy the Army of Northern Virginia by beating it in detail. He threw a strong force forward to assail certain of its positions. The assault proved successful, but the success did not come so quickly as it should have done. By determined fighting Lee gained time in which to bring his scattered forces together again at Sharpsburg before his adversary could fall upon him in force. There, on Antietam Creek, on the 17th of September, 1862, was fought a battle which is reckoned the bloodiest of all the war, in proportion to the numbers engaged.

McClellan had seventy thousand men in line, Lee forty thousand. The struggle began early in the morning and continued until after nightfall. The fighting on both sides was as heroic and as determined as any that was ever done in the world. At the end of it all both sides claimed the victory, and neither had in fact won it. Neither had been able to drive the other from his position. Neither had broken the other's lines

or gained any decisive advantage. And when morning came again neither side was willing to renew the contest, and neither would retire from the field.

For a whole day the two armies lay facing each other in grim defiance, each ready to receive the other should it attack, but neither venturing to make the assault.

After twenty-four hours of defiant waiting, Lee slowly retired to the Potomac, while McClellan lay still, not venturing to follow his adversary. Lee crossed unmolested into Virginia and took up a position within easy striking distance, but his adversary made no attempt to strike. McClellan presently advanced and stretched his great army along the Potomac. But he assumed an attitude of defence, calling insistently for reinforcements, though his army outnumbered Lee's about two to one.

He had succeeded in checking Lee's invasion of the North and turning it back. He was content with that, and in spite of President Lincoln's urgency he refused to do more, till at last General Burnside was ordered to assume command in his stead.

It was confidently expected both at the North and at the South, after Lee's withdrawal to Virginia, that as soon as his army should be rested, he would again take the offensive, assail McClellan at some point, and attempt a new march northward. This expectation was strengthened when Stuart, early in October, plunged across the river with his cavalry, galloped over the country, penetrated into Pennsylvania, and saucily rode entirely round McClellan's army, just as he had done a few months before at Richmond, in preparation for Lee's seven days' battle.

XXX

The last straw

WHEN the news came to Baillie and Agatha that Lee and McClellan had met in a great battle, and that the Army of Northern Virginia had retraced its steps across the Potomac, both lost heart a little.

But Baillie was now regaining strength at a surprising rate, and his eagerness to carry out Agatha's plan of escape, by way of England, Nassau, and a blockaded Southern port, became importunate.

Yielding to it, early in October, Agatha hurriedly made her final preparations. Through her friend in New York she engaged passage for herself, Baillie, and Sam, on a Cunard steamer appointed to sail on the 15th of the month. She made all necessary arrangements for the sick French gentleman, his French nurse, and his negro valet to make the journey to New York on

the 14th, in order that they might sail the next morning.

But a few days before the time set for their departure a great excitement arose in the town where Baillie had so long lain ill. The Confederates were coming again; they had destroyed McClellan in a great battle, current rumour reported, and were now marching upon Washington unopposed. So the rumours ran.

Later tidings corrected all this to some extent. It was learned that there had been no battle as yet, and that the invading force was only the vanguard of Lee's advance.

"I think I understand what it means," said Agatha, who had followed Stuart's operations in the past with close attention, learning to appreciate his methods. "This is simply one of General Stuart's splendidly audacious raids. He rode around McClellan at Richmond, you remember; he rode around Pope, and captured his baggage, and his uniform, and all his mules at Manassas two months ago. I suspect that he is simply riding around McClellan again in search of forage and stores and glory."

"That is probably what the movement means,"

answered Baillie, "though it may be made in preparation for another advance of the whole army, just as each of his former exploits was. In either case, if he comes this way it will answer our purpose. I shall escape with him. If it is only a cavalry raid, of course Stuart will have to force his way back through or over whatever obstacles McClellan may throw in his path, and in that case there will be a continual running fight with no secure rear for you to take shelter with. Of course, if the whole army advances, a secure way will be open, but if only the cavalry come, there will be no line of communication. In that case it will be necessary for you to remain here, or rather go on to New York and sail for Liverpool as we have both intended."

"You are forgetful, Captain Pegram. I have ridden with General Stuart before, and as to placing myself under fire, I think you know I am not without experience. No. If General Stuart comes this way, I shall ask him for a horse and play outrider to the ambulance in which you are to travel."

"But, Agatha!" he pleaded, "I am unwilling to have you expose yourself thus needlessly.

Think of the danger and the hardship, and think too of the discomfort you must suffer as a solitary woman in company with a horde of rough-riding cavalrymen!"

"Hush! I will not hear one word even in suspicion of our Virginia cavaliers. I know those superb fellows, and I trust them. They may be rough as riders, and they are certainly rough fellows for the enemy to encounter, but they are gallant gentlemen; they are as gentle as only giants of courage can be, in their attitude toward a defenceless woman. If the opportunity comes, I shall certainly ride with them."

At that moment there was a scurrying in the streets, a hurried closing of the little shops, and a scampering of juvenile chronic offenders to points of secure observation.

A minute or two later some gray-clad regiments of cavalry trotted into the town, taking temporary possession of it. They created no more of disorder, and made far less noise than a Sunday-school picnic might have done. Not a man of them was permitted to quit his place in the ranks even for a single moment, for Stuart

had given strict orders, and his lieutenants enforced them relentlessly.

There were very valuable commissary and ordnance stores belonging to the United States government in the town, and the advance squadron of the cavalry quietly took possession of these military supplies, quickly loading them into wagons, but touching no single cent's worth of private property of any kind, and molesting no citizen. So the orders ran.

Half an hour sufficed for this work, and at the end of that time the column moved out of the town in silence and good order.

Captain Baillie Pegram accompanied it in an ambulance, with Sam riding at its tail, and Agatha, mounted upon a stout and war-seasoned cavalry horse, preceding the vehicle.

At nightfall the detachment joined the main column, and there was a brief pause for supper. Agatha, in her capacity of nurse, questioned Baillie closely as to his condition, and found that he had seemingly taken no harm from excitement or weariness. When she had satisfied herself on that point, she ventured to tell him that his own battery lay around the ambulance. He

promptly sat up and asked to see his subalterns and certain of his men.

"You may see a few of them," answered his nurse, "if you will receive them lying down. If you insist upon sitting up, I'll not permit a single one of them even to grasp your hand."

He yielded to her authority, and during the remainder of the brief halting time, there was a cheering reunion of comrades and a hasty interchange of personal news between men who loved each other as only those men do who have stood together under an enemy's fire and together endured the hardships of campaigning.

The enemy's cavalry was by this time approaching in considerable force, and Stuart, whose plan did not include any purpose of unnecessary fighting, set his column in motion again. But he did not take the line of march which he had been following all day. That had been intended as a blind. By threatening several points in directions quite other than the one he meant to take, he had accomplished two important purposes. He had gained time for all his scattered detachments to rejoin the column, and he had compelled the

enemy to scatter his forces in many directions for the defence of the threatened points.

Having thus shaken off the greater part of the force pursuing him, he began his march that night in such a direction as to suggest that he meant to return if possible by the route by which he had come. For this his enemy was of course prepared. As soon as the cavalry forces that were observing his movement discovered what they took to be his purpose, they withdrew for a space and planted themselves across his pathway. Infantry and artillery forces were hurried forward in support, and the enemy confidently believed that at last the wily cavalier was securely entrapped.

To encourage this mistaken belief, Stuart threw forward a small force of men armed with carbines, and instructed them to maintain a scattering fire upon the enemy's pickets during the night as if feeling of the position in preparation for an attempt to break through it on the morrow.

No sooner was this disposition made than the main body of the Confederates was turned into the by-roads that led toward the Potomac at a

point far east of McClellan's position and farther down the river.

By a rapid march it reached the river at daylight and crossed it by sunrise. In the meanwhile, just before the dawn, the detachment which had been left behind to maintain a show of intended battle during the night, quietly withdrew, and rode at a gallop to rejoin the escaping column. The enemy did not discover their withdrawal until sunrise, by which time they were many miles away, galloping toward the river, which they crossed without molestation.

It was not until the column halted in Virginia for a breakfast that might be taken in security, that Stuart met Baillie and Agatha in person. He insisted upon hearing the whole story, even making Sam take part in its telling. At parting he sought a word apart with Agatha, and said to her:

"I suppose you and Captain Pegram have quite ceased to be 'almost strangers' by this time."

The girl flushed crimson, but managed to answer:

"No, General. I have simply been his nurse,

you know, and — and — well, he has been very ill."

"Nevertheless," answered the cavalier, "I'll court-martial him when he returns to duty, if I hear no better report than that of his conduct."

This bit of playfulness on Stuart's part had the effect of making Agatha exceedingly uncomfortable in her mind. She had so long been caring for Baillie as a man ill nigh unto death, that she had ceased to think of conventionalities in connection with her relations to him. But Stuart's jest reminded her that others might not be equally forgetful, especially now that her patient was rapidly regaining his strength.

"My work is done," she said to herself, "and I must no longer intrude myself upon Captain Pegram or his affairs. As soon as he can be sent off to Warlock in Sam's care, I must bid him a final adieu and go back to my loneliness at Willoughby. After all, I shall have enough to do there, caring for the poor negroes and managing the plantation so that it shall yield enough for them to live upon. I wonder if everything has fallen into complete neglect there during my absence? Now that Chummie has gone to the

angels, I am needed there. And besides I must look after my underground railroad affairs. I wonder if the line is in good working order, and if it is carrying as much freight as it ought."

She realised, too, now that the parting was drawing near, how much Baillie Pegram's presence had come to mean to her, how necessary a part of her life he had become, and how barren and desolate that life must be when they two should have spoken a final good-bye. For during her period of nursing, he and she had come to be the best of comrades, and at such times as his condition had permitted, they had fallen into habits of intimate converse. Their talks, it is true, had never been personal in character. They had talked of books and travel and life; now and then they had discussed philosophy, ethics, æsthetics, and a hundred other subjects external to themselves. But although their converse had not been personal in character, it had taught each to know the impulses, the sentiments, and the convictions of the other in a degree that purely personal intercourse never could have done.

Agatha understood all this now, as she had not

understood it before, and the understanding saddened her. For she was resolutely determined now to take herself as completely out of this man's life as if she had never known him at all. She proudly realised her duty, and she would not flinch from its doing.

"Did I not break off the acquaintance at that Christmas-time nearly two years ago?" she argued with herself. "Was I not strong and resolute, the moment I learned what my duty was? Why then should I not do the same again?"

She let her thoughts wander at will. "It is true there was war between us then, and there is none now. There never has been since Chummie talked with me that last night of his life. And it seems harder now in other ways. Since I have come to know Captain Pegram so well, and especially since I have taken care of him in a time of helplessness, it seems harder to send him away and tell him that we are mere acquaintances, not likely to see much of each other hereafter."

Then she generalised in this fashion:

"Life is very hard on women in any case — much harder than it is on men, in every way.

And the worst of it is that men do not want it to be so, and nothing they can do can prevent. Even in that restriction of our lives which petty conventionality forces upon us, men cannot come to our relief. It is women who hold women to such restrictions. Men would laugh them away, if we would let them, but we never will. We hold each other to the rigidest standards of propriety, even when propriety makes needless and foolish exactions of us. Men never do that. They want us to be innocently as free as they are, but we are afraid to be so. We are afraid of other women. Even Chummie could not succeed in setting me free. I was too much afraid of other women's opinions, too much a slave to other women's standards to accept the freedom he tried so hard to force upon me.

"No, that isn't just it. I am not really afraid of other women's opinions; I am afraid of my own. I have laughed at and defied other women's standards, many a time, and I shall go on doing so to the end, whenever I am convinced that their opinions are unsound and their standards wrong. I did that when I went North to find and rescue Captain Pegram. I knew perfectly that my good

aunts would look upon my conduct with positive horror, and that the least any other woman of my acquaintance would say about my conduct would be 'How could she?' in tones that meant all that is possible of condemnation. But I did not care for all that, and I do not care for it now, because I know that what I did was right, and that Chummie would have said so if he had lived till now. The trouble is that in the main I share those opinions of other women which so restrict the liberty of all women. I am afraid of those opinions because they are my own as well as others'; I submit myself to those standards of feminine conduct because I share the opinion that sets them up and enforces obedience to them."

At this point Agatha "shied" away from the thought that had in fact suggested all this introspective meditation. She would not admit, even to herself, that she was strongly moved by a perfectly natural impulse, to bridge the chasm that lay between her and Baillie Pegram, to remind him of what he had said to her that far-away morning on the picket-line at Fairfax Courthouse, and so give him opportunity to say it again. When that thought intruded itself upon

her, she was shocked and startled by it. It seemed to her immodest in an extreme degree, unwomanly, almost atrocious. She would not harbour it for a moment. She cast it out of her mind, and was bitterly resentful against herself for having permitted it even to suggest itself.

"I must act at once," she resolved, when the day's march was resumed. "I must flee from the devil of this temptation. If Captain Pegram suffers no relapse to-day, I will bid him good-bye in the morning. No, I will not bid him good-bye. That would be too — well, it would be almost like acting upon that hideous thought. I shall simply go without saying a word to him. Perhaps I shall leave a little note for him, simply telling him that I am going to look after affairs at Willoughby, as he no longer needs his French nurse. I'll be very careful, in writing it, not to — not to make it more than coldly courteous and friendly."

It was nearly nightfall when the cavalcade rejoined the main body of Lee's army. Agatha made haste to secure a careful examination of Baillie by a staff surgeon. He reported that the convalescent man had taken no harm from the

journey, but was so far recovered that a month's rest would render him fit for duty again. Assured of this, Agatha sent for Sam and minutely instructed him as to the care of his master on the homeward journey which, she had arranged, was to begin immediately, with the assistance of an ambulance for a part of the way.

Then, early the next morning, she went to Stuart, and preferred a request. In the present disturbed state of things she hesitated to make the journey to Willoughby alone, and she asked for an escort for a day.

Stuart looked at her with a face far sadder than his was accustomed to be, and said:

"I have very bad news for you, Miss Agatha. You cannot go to Willoughby — for there is no Willoughby. That was one of the many plantations ravaged by Pope while he held Northern Virginia. The house and all the barns were burned, and every living animal for a score of miles around was killed. Even if Willoughby had been spared, it would not do for you to live there now. The armies will move to new positions presently, — nobody knows where, — and this northern part of Virginia will be no fit place

for women and children to live in till the war is over."

The girl sat pale and speechless, as she listened. It was as if she had received a blow in the face. She had bravely met danger and sorrow and hardship, and had endured them all with heroic resolution. She seemed now quite unable to endure this new trial of her courage. She made no outcry and shed no tears. She simply sat there before the headquarters camp-fire, statue-like in her pallor and her immobility. Stuart gently laid his hand upon her head, and sought to soothe her with a voice that was always gentle when he spoke to a woman.

Agatha seemed not to know what he was doing. She made no response to his words, and as he looked into her face the light went out of her great brown eyes.

A moment later she reeled, and Stuart caught her in his brawny arms.

"Bring a surgeon quick," he commanded.

Then he gently laid the seemingly lifeless form upon a blanket which the sentinel spread upon the ground.

XXXI

At Warlock and at the Oaks

FOR the first time in her life Agatha Ronald was ill. For the first time her strength had given way under prolonged strain. The surgeon who had been summoned to attend her ordered that she should be sent immediately to some place in rear of the army's exposed position, where she could have complete rest.

Unfortunately there was no such place within a day's journey — no place which might not at any hour become the scene of battle or at the least of massive manœuvring. Nowhere short of Charlottesville was there a secure resting-place for the overwrought nerves that had so stoutly held their own as long as their ministering strength was needed in the service of others.

While this matter was still under perplexed discussion, Marshall Pollard made his timely appearance. Hearing of the arrival of Baillie

and Agatha with Stuart's returning column, he had ridden forward from his camp to meet and greet his friends. He had passed a quarter of an hour with the master of Warlock, who was now permitted to sit up most of the time, and who was to start almost immediately on his homeward journey. While they two were talking together, word reached Sam's ears that his "Mis' Agatha" had fallen ill at General Stuart's camp-fire. Marshall went with him immediately to her, under an injunction from Baillie to "get her out of this, Marshall, if you can. Tell her not to mind me, but to take care of herself. Tell her I shall be ready for duty almost immediately — tell her I'm on duty — tell her anything and everything that will persuade her to let you take her to a place of safety."

Marshall was quick to see the necessity of prompt action, and Agatha was far too ill to oppose his plans in any way. Stuart had ordered a little tent stretched for her, and here it was decided she should remain until Captain Pollard could arrange for her removal.

He first secured a week's leave of absence for himself. While arranging that, he had half a

dozen of his men scouring the country round about in search of a carriage. One was found which had escaped destruction during the days of Pope's unsparing ravaging. It was an old-fashioned vehicle of family state, swung high upon C springs and stoutly built for service.

In this conveyance, Agatha, still dazed and unresisting, was started on her homeward journey early the next morning. One of Pollard's battery men acted as driver, while Pollard himself rode by the side of the carriage.

About midnight the party reached Charlottesville, where tender, loving hands took charge of Agatha for the night.

The journey had rather rested than wearied her, and the physician who had been summoned to attend her found her free from all positive illness.

"She has need of nothing now but rest and quiet," he said.

When Marshall called upon her in the morning, he found the young woman's mind clear again, and her nerves under control.

"Tell me of Captain Pegram," she eagerly demanded, as soon as she had briefly expressed

her gratitude to Pollard for the care he was taking for her comfort.

With that gentle smile which always so invited affection, Marshall reassured her concerning her late patient.

"He is in Sam's excellent hands, and on his way to the rear by this time. He will be on duty again pretty soon. Indeed, if the army were stationed anywhere in particular just now he wouldn't go away from it at all. He would take command of his battery at once, merely reporting himself on the sick-list for a week or two. As it is he must go away for a little while. Now let us talk about yourself. I have a week's leave, granted for the express purpose of letting me do what is best for you. Tell me what is best — or rather — it's the same thing — what is most to your liking? Will you stay here, or — "

"If I may," she answered, quickly, "I want to go home — to The Oaks, I mean, for that is the only home I have in all the world now. Please take me there."

"It would be a very long journey by carriage," he said, as if talking to himself, "but we can

make the trip by rail if you are strong enough to stand it."

It was necessary in those days to think of a railway journey as a formidable undertaking for any but the strongest persons. There were no such things known then as sleeping-cars, or drawing-room cars. The railroads were badly built, with the rails spiked down to loose ties, and in no way joined together at their ends. The cars were coupled together by chain links, and operated with hand-brakes, so that when a train was stopping, there was a jolting which in our day would be deemed intolerable. In Virginia at that time there was the additional discomfort of laminated iron rails, and cars badly out of repair.

But Agatha's courage had come back to her now, and she was eager to complete her journey as speedily as possible. So Marshall sent the carriage back to its owner, and with Agatha, took the first train for Lynchburg, whence another railroad would convey them to their destination.

There was very little of conversation between the two as they travelled, for the jarring and the rattle of the disjointed train, as it jolted over its intolerably ill-kept road-bed, made talking diffi-

cult and hearing well-nigh impossible. But during the long pauses at the stations Agatha related the story of her adventures, with something of that relish which one always feels in telling of experiences past, which were anything but relishful at the time of their occurrence.

Better still, the two friends talked much of Baillie Pegram, a subject that enlisted the sympathetic interest of both, and drew them closer than ever together as friends.

The good ladies of The Oaks welcomed Agatha with all of tenderness that their dignity would permit. They deeply disapproved of all that she had done, of course, but they reflected that she had suffered much, and as she was not now strong they forebore to emphasise by words of censure the condemnation which they could not avoid manifesting in their manner. Agatha did not much mind their disapproval. This was one of the cases in which, feeling that her conduct had been altogether right, she was not troubled by the contrary opinions of others. Moreover she had other subjects to think about.

Captain Pollard went at once to Warlock, after delivering his charge into her aunts' hands, and

on the next day, when he visited The Oaks to ask concerning her, he reported that the master of Warlock had reached home and was still rapidly gaining strength.

This news gave Agatha a little shock. She had intended, as we know, to take herself out of Captain Pegram's life as quickly and as completely as possible, and now circumstances had forced her to place herself near to him again. She knew that as soon as he should be able to ride, ordinary courtesy would compel him to visit her, and — well, she did not want him to do that. She felt herself in the position of a woman who has purposely placed herself in the way of inviting attentions, or at least has suffered herself to be so placed.

She had done nothing of the kind, of course. Indeed, she had had no choice in the matter, but the very thought that Baillie Pegram might so interpret her course, distressed her greatly, in her still nerve-tortured condition. She cared nothing whatever for what others, including her aunts, might think of the matter, but the thought that Baillie Pegram might misunderstand was intolerable.

Her aunts added to her embarrassment by adopting a course which plainly showed that they entertained a fear identical with her own. They sent a note to Warlock every day, inquiring concerning the health of that plantation's master. They made these notes as coldly formal as stilted rhetoric could contrive, and they were at pains to read the missives to Agatha before sending them.

"Why do you do that?" she asked, when the second day's note was read. There was almost a querulous tone in her protest.

"Why, it seems to us proper, dear; we want you to be assured that we make no mention of your presence here, but take the utmost possible pains to show Captain Pegram how entirely you are —"

At that point Agatha rose to her feet and looked indignantly at her relatives. For a moment there was danger of an outbreak of offended pride, but by an effort the girl controlled herself and said, simply:

"Please don't do it any more. I shall feel hurt if you offer again to read to me anything you may have written. If you will excuse me I

think I will go to my room now. I am not strong to-day."

It was the custom of the good ladies to protest that they "never could understand Agatha;" but on this occasion they understood her sufficiently to know that they had trodden very near a danger-line which they were more than unwilling to cross.

Baillie Pegram in his turn was by no means minded to submit to the manifest purpose of The Oaks ladies that he should hear nothing about Agatha, beyond what Marshall Pollard had reported to him during the two days of his stay at Warlock. Marshall had gone now, and Baillie wrote in response to the second of the notes:

"I am getting well quite as rapidly as my best friends could wish. There is not the slightest occasion for uneasiness about me. I am even permitted to ride horseback a little. But I am exceedingly anxious for tidings of Miss Agatha, whom you have not mentioned in either of your notes. Will you not send me word concerning her, or better still, if she is well enough to write, will you not ask her to send me a few lines? My gratitude to her for all that she has done

for me is very great, and so is my anxiety to know that she is recovering from the painful illness which was caused by her generous self-sacrifice in my behalf."

As Agatha had asked her aunts not to read to her their letters to the master of Warlock, those ladies chose to interpret her request as including his letter to them. They made no mention of the fact that he had written to make inquiries concerning her. She wondered a little that he had not done so, but on the whole, she argued, it was better so.

Baillie was not so easily pleased. He chafed when the next note came from The Oaks, bringing no tidings from Agatha, and when still another of like character followed it, he grew uneasy, lest the silence might mean that Agatha had herself forbidden all mention of her in letters from The Oaks.

"She is taking that method, probably," he argued, "of dismissing me again, and letting me know that I must not presume upon the service she has done me. What a fool I am, to be sure! I have been reckoning upon her devotion to me in my illness and captivity as proof that what I

brutally blurted out at Fairfax Court-house was not unwelcome to her after all. With her quick feminine perceptions, she has discovered how I have been misinterpreting her duty doing, and she wants now to show me my error in the simplest way possible."

As he meditated, the soldier impulse in him asserted itself, — the impulse to dare the worst in the hope of achieving the best.

Acting upon that impulse he immediately wrote a note to Agatha, and sent it by Sam, with orders to deliver it to her in person, if possible, and at all events to ask for an answer and fetch it.

In his note he told Agatha of his unanswered inquiries, and of the great uneasiness he felt concerning her health. Finally he begged her to relieve his anxiety by sending a line in reply.

XXXII

In righteous wrath

THE grounds about The Oaks mansion were much more extensive than was customary on Virginia plantations. The late owner, Agatha's father, had cherished the forest growths jealously, permitting no tree to be cut that could in any wise be preserved, and forbidding the encroachment of the lawns immediately about the house upon the wild woodland growths that bordered and surrounded them. It was Agatha's delight on windy autumn days to wander in these woodlands, and on this morning Sam encountered her quite half a mile from the house. She was hatless, and the wind was taking what liberties it pleased with her thick-growing hair, while she, having turned child again in her enjoyment of the brilliant, gusty morning, was wading about in the depths of the fallen leaves, delighting her soul with their rustling.

Sam delivered his note and she read it. Instantly the child spirit in her took flight and she became the strong, resolute, self-contained young woman that she had learned to be during the storm and stress period of her recent life. Her sudden access of dignity did not spare even Sam. Like an officer in battle issuing his orders, she turned to the negro boy and said:

"Return to your master at once. Tell him you met me far from the house. Say to him that I am almost as well as ever, and that I will answer his note during the day. There. Go now, and deliver the message as I have given it to you. Do you hear?"

Sam's face grew long, as he turned about, and Agatha caught sight of it. She was in a mighty rage, but not with Sam. She bethought her that the boy had misunderstood, to the injury of his feelings, so she called to him, and added:

"I did not mean to speak sharply to you, Sam. You don't deserve any but kindly words. I was thinking of something else. How are you since you got back to Warlock, and tell me truly how your master is."

"Thank you, Mis' Agatha," answered the

boy, his face all smiles again, "Mas' Baillie he's a-gittin' as lively as a spring chicken what don't mean to be ketched. He rides every day now, an' don't he jes' eat! He'll be all right in a week or two, yo' may be sure. As fer Sam, he ain't never nothin' else but well, specially now dat we done git away from dem Yankees an' back to Warlock ag'in!"

Nevertheless Sam grew distinctly melancholy as he rode homeward, repeating his message time and again in order that he might deliver it correctly. The message seemed to him unduly curt, and certainly the note he had delivered seemed somehow to have angered Agatha. Sam wondered how and why, and he grieved over the circumstance, too, for Sam had taken the liberty of making up his mind that Agatha would make an ideal mistress at Warlock, and that the master of Warlock was planning some such destiny for her. Her message and her manner suggested that she resented all this, and that his master's hopes, which he took for granted, were likely to be disappointed.

Baillie Pegram's interpretation of the message

when it was delivered to him did not materially differ from that which Sam had put upon it.

"She resents the liberty I have taken," he thought, "in writing to her directly. She has forbidden her aunts to reply to my inquiries made through them. She has sought in that way to tell me, by indirection, that the old family war between herself and me still endures; that all her suffering and sacrifice in ministering to me was inspired solely by a sense of duty; that she wishes now to end our intimacy as she did two years ago. Clearly that is the state of the case, and she is naturally angry now that I have forced an attention upon her which compels her to tell me directly what she had meant me to infer. What an idiot I was to do that!"

In the meanwhile Agatha had walked rapidly to the house. At the beginning of her journey she indulged her indignation freely. She rehearsed all the bitingly sarcastic things she meant to say to her aunts, all the defiance she intended to hurl at their helpless heads. But as she spent her superfluous vitality in brisk walking, she recovered her self-control.

"I will not scold," she resolved. "That

would be undignified. I will be calm and courteous, saying as little as may be necessary to let them see my displeasure. They have grievously compromised my dignity by what they have done. I must not sacrifice what remains of it by a petulant outbreak. They have treated me like a child in pinafores, who must be restrained lest she misbehave. I must show them that I have outgrown pinafores. I must prove myself incapable of childish misbehaviour."

Firm in this determination, she entered the house with Baillie Pegram's note in her hand, and upon joining her aunts before the library fire, she said quite calmly:

"I have a note from Captain Pegram, who has got a notion into his head that I am seriously ill, and that you are concealing the fact from his friendly knowledge. He tells me he has twice asked you for news of me, and you have made no response. Of course you forgot to mention in your notes that I am quite well again."

The ladies looked at each other with troubled eyes. Presently one of them spoke:

"No, dear, we did not forget. We have only been mindful of proprieties which Mr. Pegram

seems strangely to forget or ignore. Under the circumstances, and in view of the relations between the Ronalds and the Pegrams, it seemed to us rather impertinent in him to send messages to you, even through us. We intended to rebuke his presumption by ignoring the messages. Why, he even went so far as to ask us to let you write to him yourself."

Agatha received all this in silence, controlling herself with difficulty. It was not until a full minute after her aunt had ceased to speak that she said:

"Go on, please."

"There would seem to be no more to say; for surely it is needless to comment upon Mr. Pegram's crowning impertinence in writing directly to you."

"Go on, please. Tell me all about it. You see I don't at all understand."

By this time the good dames began to realise that Agatha was either very angry or very deeply hurt, so they decided to soothe and placate her. This is how they did it.

"No, dear, I suppose you do not understand. How should you, with such bringing up as your

grandfather gave you? Of all the strange perversities — "

"Stop!" cried Agatha, rising from her chair with a look upon her face which her aunts did not understand but gravely feared. Their last spoken words had set her free to speak. She had not dared resent their criticism of Baillie Pegram's conduct. That might have been misinterpreted. But the reflection upon her grandfather was a different matter. She stood there livid to the lips and shaking with the indignation which she was struggling to suppress. After that one word, "Stop!" she remained silent for a space, struggling to restrain the angry utterance that was surging to her lips. At last, speaking in a constrained voice, she said:

"I will not hear another word. Neither you nor any other human being is worthy to speak my grandfather's name except with reverence. He was great, and wise, and unspeakably good. He hated lies and shams and false conventionalities."

Here the roused tigress in Agatha was sharply restrained. She found herself about to indulge in a tirade, and that she was resolved not on any

account to do. Still speaking in a voice of enforced calm, she added:

"I must go now and write to Captain Pegram. I shall dine with the Misses Blair at The Forest to-day."

To Baillie she wrote:

"It is very kind of you to feel so much solicitude on my account. But it is needless, as I am quite well again and growing stronger every day. I go in half an hour to dine at The Forest, where I shall remain till to-morrow. After that I shall go to Richmond in search of some way in which I may be of service. I am pleased to hear through Sam that you are so greatly better. Thank you again for all your kindness to me, and good-bye."

Having despatched this note, Agatha donned her hat and cloak and walked out of the house. Without a pause she passed on through the grounds and along the road to the plantation known as The Forest.

She had made no adieus to her aunts. "To do that," she reflected, "I should have to tell lies, or act them. I should have to say I am sorry to leave them, and I am not sorry. Oh, Chummie! the world is very lonely now that you are not in

it! But you mustn't grieve in heaven, Chummie. It will not be for long, you know, and while I stay here I'm going to try harder than ever to be true and good and altogether truthful, as you want me to be, and when I go to join you I'll be happy enough to make up for all these little troubles here."

At that moment a merry gust of wind blew off her headgear. She picked it up, but did not replace it on her head. She liked to feel the crisp breezes in her face. She even indulged the fancy that they bore caresses to her from Chummie.

XXXIII

Under red leaves

AGATHA'S note, coming after her curt message, was a sore puzzle to its recipient. One might interpret it to mean anything or nothing. It was courteous enough, but its courtesy was colourless and cold. It was such a note as might have been addressed to the veriest stranger. There was nothing in it to reassure the master of Warlock as to Agatha's view of his conduct, nothing to allay his fear that she had resented his inquiries as an impertinence. On the contrary, if that were the meaning of the former silence and of the morning's message, this note was precisely such as a sensitively self-respecting young woman might have written when compelled by his persistence to write to him at all.

It was a very bad quarter of an hour with him,

during which he read the missive a dozen times, unable to make out what it meant.

But Baillie Pegram was not a man to despair until he must, or to rest under a painful uncertainty. It was his habit of mind to meet dangers and difficulties half-way, and question them insistently concerning their extent. He called Sam, therefore, and bade him bring the easy-going pacer which he had begun to ride for exercise, and mounting the animal he set off at a gentle gait toward The Forest.

He appeared there half an hour before the four o'clock dinner was announced, and his welcome by his hostesses, Miss Blair and her sister, was all the warmer for the reason that his arrival indicated, more surely than any message from Warlock could have done, the extent of his convalescence.

Perhaps he was welcome also on another account. For the Misses Blair were deeply concerned about Agatha, and they hoped that he might persuade her, as they had failed to do, to give up her plan of going to Richmond and seeking service as a hospital nurse or in some other capacity in which a woman might employ herself.

They were deeply concerned as to the matter of nursing for the reason that it was deemed highly improper in Virginia for any but married women to nurse in the military hospitals, where the patients, of course, were men.

Agatha had told them as little as possible of her affairs. She had said nothing whatever of her quarrel with her aunts, only telling them that she had left The Oaks finally, and asking them to send thither for such personal belongings as she had there, so that she might remain overnight at The Forest, and go to Richmond on the morrow. The younger Miss Blair had volunteered to go in person on this errand, and from her the ladies at The Oaks had first learned that Agatha had finally quitted the place in her resentment. They were greatly distressed, and immediately ordered their carriage and drove to The Forest, where Baillie Pegram found them on his arrival.

Their pleadings with Agatha had been earnest, insistent, and wholly fruitless. She had manifested no anger, and they had discovered no resentment in her voice as she replied to them. She had made no complaints and uttered no

reproaches. To all their pleadings she had answered, simply:

"I have quite decided upon my course. I shall not change my plans."

The good dames were in such despair that they even welcomed Baillie's coming.

"We have done everything, said everything," they hastily explained to him; "why, we have almost *apologised* to the child, and all to no purpose. Perhaps you can have some influence, Captain Pegram. Will you not speak to her?"

"I shall speak to her, of course," was his reply. "I am here indeed for that express purpose. But I shall certainly not try to dissuade her from any course that she may desire to pursue. That would be an impertinence of which I am incapable."

The Oaks ladies flushed as he spoke the word "impertinence," remembering their own recent use of the term in connection with his conduct. Perhaps Agatha had told him of that in her letter, they thought. If so it would be most embarrassing for them to dine in his company and hers. So, pleading their great agitation of mind as their excuse, they returned at once to The Oaks, leaving

Baillie and Agatha as the only guests of the Misses Blair at dinner.

When left alone with the young woman after dinner, the master of Warlock opened the conversation as promptly as it was his custom to open fire when the proper moment had come.

"Agatha," he began, as the two stood in the piazza in the glow of the early setting sun and in the midst of the blood-red Virginia creepers that embowered the place, "Agatha, do you remember the words I spoke to you on the picket-line at Fairfax Court-house?" Then without waiting for her reply, he continued: "I have come to you now to say those words over again, at a more fitting time and in a more appropriate place. I love you. I have loved you ever since those days in Richmond, those precious days when I first began to know you for what you are. I loved you all through that cruel time when, in obedience to what you believed was your duty, you decreed that there should be 'war between me and thee.' And now after all that you have done and dared for me, my love for a nature so pure, so noble, so heroic, passes understanding.

I have a right to tell you this now. Tell me in return, if it displeases you?"

With that absolute truthfulness which was the basis of her nature, Agatha replied as frankly as he had spoken.

"It pleases me," she said. "I had not expected this. I thought I had repulsed you so rudely that — oh! Baillie, you will never know."

In a torrent of tears that were a more welcome answer than any words could have been, she buried her face in her hands.

Half an hour later these two sat by a crackling fire, arranging practical affairs.

"You do not wish to go back to The Oaks, then, even for a few weeks, and to save appearances?"

"No, Baillie, I cannot. I should have to act a lie every hour of my stay there. I should be obliged to pretend friendship for my aunts when I feel nothing of the kind. They have insulted the memory of my grandfather, and they have spoken of you in a way that never so long as I live will I let any human being speak of you without resenting it. I do not care to 'save appearances,' as you put it. Appearances may look

out for themselves. 'Saving appearances' is only a sneaking way of lying. No. I will go to some friends in Richmond, if they will let me —"

"Why not go to Warlock?" he asked.

"Why, that would outrage the proprieties beyond forgiveness now that we — well, under the circumstances."

So Mistress Agatha did "care for appearances" and conventions after all. But Baillie did not think of that.

"Why not go there as the mistress of Warlock — as my wife?" he asked. "Why should we not be married to-morrow at Christ-Church-in-the-Woods? I am a soldier. I shall be strong enough to return to duty presently. When I do so I shall want to feel that you are safe at Warlock, that you are mine, my wife to cherish while I live. Say that it shall be so, Agatha! Let me send word to Mr. Berkeley, the rector, to-night, that we shall be at the church at noon to-morrow!"

The girl thought for a moment, and then said:

"Yes, that will be best. For then, if you fall ill or are wounded again, I shall have a right to

"'At Christ-church-in-the-woods'"

go to you and care for you. Let it be so. Now you must not ride to Warlock on horseback to-night. It is very cool, and you have already overtaxed your strength. I shall ask Miss Blair to send you over in her carriage."

When he had gone Agatha announced the news to her hostesses and straightway set about writing a score of little notes to be despatched by negro messengers early in the morning, to her friends in the neighbourhood. To her aunts she wrote simply, and without formal address of any kind, the bare statement:

"Captain Baillie Pegram and I are to be married to-morrow, Thursday, at noon, at Christ-Church-in-the-Woods."

This note she sent before going to bed. When it was received at The Oaks, a conversation ensued which was largely ejaculatory:

"How shocking!"

"Yes, and how scandalous!"

"What will people say!"

"The girl must be bewitched!"

"And yet it is better than nursing soldiers, and she an unmarried woman!"

"Perhaps. At any rate it is clear that we can

exercise no restraint over the poor, headstrong child."

"No, Captain Pegram has completely undermined our influence. Of course we cannot lend our countenance to the affair by attending!"

"I think we must. Otherwise people will talk. They might even call it a runaway match."

"That would be too dreadful!"

"Yes. I think we must put the best face we can on the affair by attending. In these war-times everything is topsyturvy. Ah, me! What a pity we couldn't have had the child's bring-ing-up to ourselves!"

"Yes, we should have made a very different woman of her. Anyhow, with this marriage all our responsibility for her will be at an end. And after all, perhaps it is as well to have it so, for if she had remained single there is no knowing at what moment she would have done something else as scandalous as her going North to nurse Mr. Pegram was."

And so they cackled for half the night.

XXXIV

The end and after

A FEW weeks later came the news that a campaign was on and battle impending. Burnside had replaced McClellan in command of the Federal armies in Virginia. He had at once begun a campaign against Richmond, moving by way of Fredericksburg. There Lee met him, posting the Southern veterans on the circling hills behind the town and awaiting his adversary's assault.

Baillie Pegram had resumed command of his battery now, but no longer with the light guns that he had used while galloping with Stuart. A captured Federal battery of six twelve-pounder Napoleons had been assigned to him, and with these he took position on the crest of Marye's Heights, where there was presently to occur one of the most heroic battles of all the war.

It was nearly mid-December when Burnside

crossed the river and moved to assault Lee. His army, though greater than Lee's, was not quite so great in numbers as it had been when McClellan had commanded it near Richmond's gates; but it was greatly more formidable in all other respects. The men who composed it were war-seasoned veterans now, and its officers had fully learned their trade of command. Moreover the army had successfully held its own against Lee at Sharpsburg, and the confidence inspired by that event was an important element of strength. But in Burnside the Federal administration had again failed to find a leader capable of so employing the North's stupendous resources of men, money, and material as to crush the splendid resistance of the Army of Northern Virginia.

So Burnside failed, as McDowell, and McClellan, and Pope had failed before, and as Hooker, who succeeded him in command, failed even more conspicuously, when, in the following spring, he made the campaign of Chancellorsville.

After Chancellorsville Lee crossed the Potomac again. Then came Gettysburg, which proved to be the turning-point in the war, so far as the armies of Virginia were concerned.

For before the next campaign opened — the campaign of the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, and Cold Harbour — the North had recognised in Grant a leader who knew what use to make of the means at his command, and, more important still, a leader who clearly saw that the strength of the Confederacy lay, not in the possession of cities or the holding of strategic positions, but in the superb fighting force of Lee's army. Grant, in supreme command of all the armies of the Union, directed the work of all of them to the one task of crushing Lee, and in the end he accomplished it. When that was done, this most stupendous war in modern history was over.

In all these epoch-making events the master of Warlock did his part, with a devotion that wrought a colonel's stars upon his collar and added honour to the name he bore. During the long winter of 1863-64, while the mud-bound armies lay helplessly idle in winter quarters, Baillie had Agatha with him in his log hut near Orange Court-house, and before the campaign opened at the Wilderness in the spring, an heir to Warlock was born in camp, — a child veritably "cradled in a revolution."

Agatha was near her husband, too, during the long siege of Petersburg, though she could not be actually with him; for his place was on the lines, where the "scream of shot, and burst of shell, and bellowing of the mortars" were ceaseless by night and by day, for the space of eight months, before the end came. But she was always near at hand, as one of that heroic band of women who stayed and starved in the beleaguered city, heedless of the storm of huge shells that daily wrecked buildings there and tore cavernous trenches in the streets. She remained there to the end as the others did, in order that they might minister in loving, life-saving ways to the wounded, who were daily brought in from the lines on ever-busy litters.

When at last the attenuated lines that had so long and so heroically held their ground against an ever-increasing disparity of numbers, were broken, and Lee ordered the instant evacuation of the city, Agatha made her way on foot to Warlock, and there, with her babe, awaited the return of the man she loved, and whose voice she fancied she could hear in the receding echoes of the cannon.

He came at last, — ten days later, — and Agatha greeted him with loving looks and words that cheered him in that despondency that at first made every returning Confederate lament that he had not been permitted to share the fate of those who had fallen facing the foe.

Over the mantel in that family room which in Virginia was always called "the chamber," Agatha hung up the artillery sword, the pistols, the colonel's sash, and the Mexican spurs that the master of Warlock had worn in his campaigning.

"Those are for the little boy to see daily as he grows up, so that he may know what manner of man his mother wishes him to become — what manner of man his mother loves and reveres."

Then she brought two other mementos and hung them also on the wall. One was the sergeant-major's jacket on which she had stitched the chevrons on the day before Manassas.

"So you found the old jacket, did you?" asked Baillie. "I kept it as a reminder of you."

"Yes — I know. I found it in the little closet where you had hung it. I should have left it there always, just as your hands had placed it, if — if you had not come back to Warlock again."

She was weeping now, but her face was joyous in spite of the tears. For had he not come back to her, strong and well and still young? And should not they two find ways in which to meet their present poverty with stout hearts and heads erect?

"We must 'look up,' Baillie, 'and not down — forward and not backward.' We have each other left —"

"And the boy — *our* boy!" he interrupted. "Yes, we have enough to live for — enough to enrich our lives to the end. And thanks to you I have courage left both to do and to endure."

"Courage? Of course. You could never lose that and still live. It is as vital a part of you as your head itself is."

Then she brought the other memento and fastened it into its place. It was a faded red feather.

"I have carried that on my person," she said, "ever since that day at Fairfax Court-house when you first told me that you loved me."

A few months later Marshall Pollard came. He hobbled upon a cork leg which he had not

yet learned to use with ease, but the old smile was on his face, the old cheer in his voice.

"Agatha," he said, "I should like to occupy my old quarters here during my stay, if I may. You see, Baillie, it is as I told you long years ago — I must ask leave of my lady now. But I don't mind, as my lady happens to be Agatha instead of some other."

"And your other prediction is fulfilled, too," answered the master of Warlock, "the prediction that you made out there by the plantation gate. The old life of Virginia is completely gone, the old conditions have been utterly swept away. We can never re-create them. We can never bring the old life back, and perhaps it is better so. We Virginians had for generations lived in the past. Our manner of life and all our conceptions of living were those of a century ago. We had not kept step with progress. We have been rudely shaken out of the lethargic ease that was so delightful and perhaps so bad for us. We are free now to create a new life in tune with that of the modern world.

"And we shall do that right manfully. We shall develop the resources of our region, and the

South will grow more prosperous than it ever was before. Better still, our children will be educated in the gospel of work, and learn the lesson that was never taught to you and me till war came to teach us, that it is in strenuous endeavour, and not in paralysing ease, that a man finds the greatest happiness in life."

"Tell me of your plans, Baillie."

"They are not mine. They are Agatha's. We have arranged to convert this plantation, and The Oaks, and all the land round about — for the company we have formed has bought every acre that could be had — into a nest of coal mines. The deposit is a rich one, you know, and I have had no difficulty in getting practical men with abundant capital to join me in the enterprise. We are already building a branch railroad to carry our product. But there is to be no shaft sunk within half a mile of Warlock House, so that I shall be 'master of Warlock' still. Tell us now of your own affairs, Marshall."

"There is not much to tell. Thanks to Agatha's wonderful economy in spending, I still have investments at the North which yield me a sufficient income for my small needs. I have

divided my plantation into little farms, and have let them to the best of the negroes and to some white farmers. I am to get my rentals in the shape of a share of the crops. This sets me free to do the work that best pleases me. You know I have been writing in a small way with some success ever since I grew up. I shall write some books now. I think I have some messages to deliver that some at least of my fellow men may be the better or the happier for hearing."

"But you will want to marry some day."

"No. My 'some day' died years ago."

THE END.

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